IS Volume6

source : https://www.baka-tsuki.org/project/index.php?title=IS:Volume6

These are the novel illustrations that were included in volume 6

Okiura

【著者】

弓弦イズル

ゆみづる・いずる

ブログはなるべく週一更新中。
たまに色々企画とかやります。
よかったら見に来てね！　拍手レスもあるよ！
http://izurism.blog25.fc2.com/

いよいよ来月からアニメスタート！
声優さんの演技に、エイトビットさんの絵に大感激。
よーし、目指せ大人気、狙え２期！

ちなみに色々とＩＳ関係の企画動いてます。
アレとかアレとか楽しみだ！（まだ秘密だけど！）

【イラストレーター】

okiura

おきうら

毛糸のカー○ィを
ずっと毛玉のカー○ィと認識してました。
多分忘れるか、一生このままです。
修正は効きません。

カバーイラスト／okiura　装丁／ヒーローズ

InfiniteStratos
IS
インフィニット・ストラトス
6

弓弦イズル
IzuruYumizuru

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IS〈インフィニット・ストラトス〉⑥
弓弦イズル

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メディアファクトリー
MEDIA FACTORY

IS〈インフィニット・ストラトス〉⑥

一夏の誕生日に心を躍らせるヒロイン一同。
そんな中、セシリアだけは学園祭に現れた謎の敵に表情を暗くしていた。
「ＢＴ二号機、サイレント・ゼフィルス……次はやらせませんわ」

そして、急遽一年生も参加することになった
ＩＳ高速機動バトルレース『キャノンボール・ファスト』。
しかし、そこにも『亡国機業<ファントム・タスク>』の魔の手が伸びる……。
ハイスピード学園バトルラブコメ、ノンストップの第六巻！

MF文庫J

弓弦イズルの本

- IS〈インフィニット・ストラトス〉 ［イラスト：okiura］
- IS〈インフィニット・ストラトス〉② ［イラスト：okiura］
- IS〈インフィニット・ストラトス〉③ ［イラスト：okiura］
- IS〈インフィニット・ストラトス〉④ ［イラスト：okiura］
- IS〈インフィニット・ストラトス〉⑤ ［イラスト：okiura］
- IS〈インフィニット・ストラトス〉⑥ ［イラスト：okiura］

Infinite Stratos

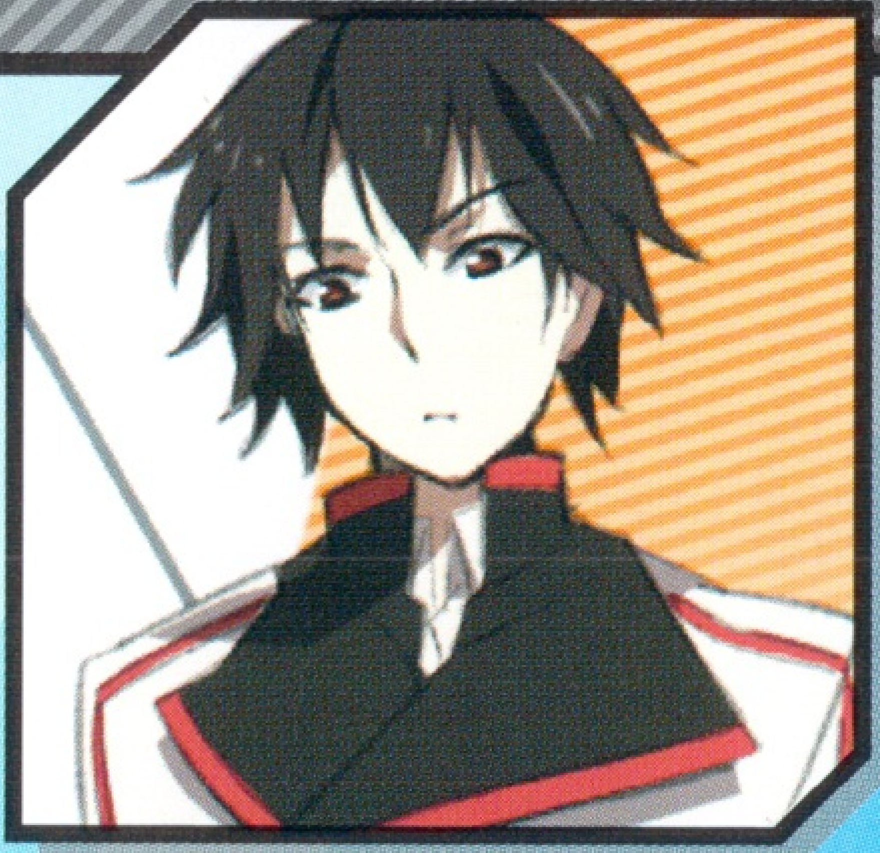
6

Izuru Yumizuru

「い、一夏さん!?」
かぁぁぁぁ
?

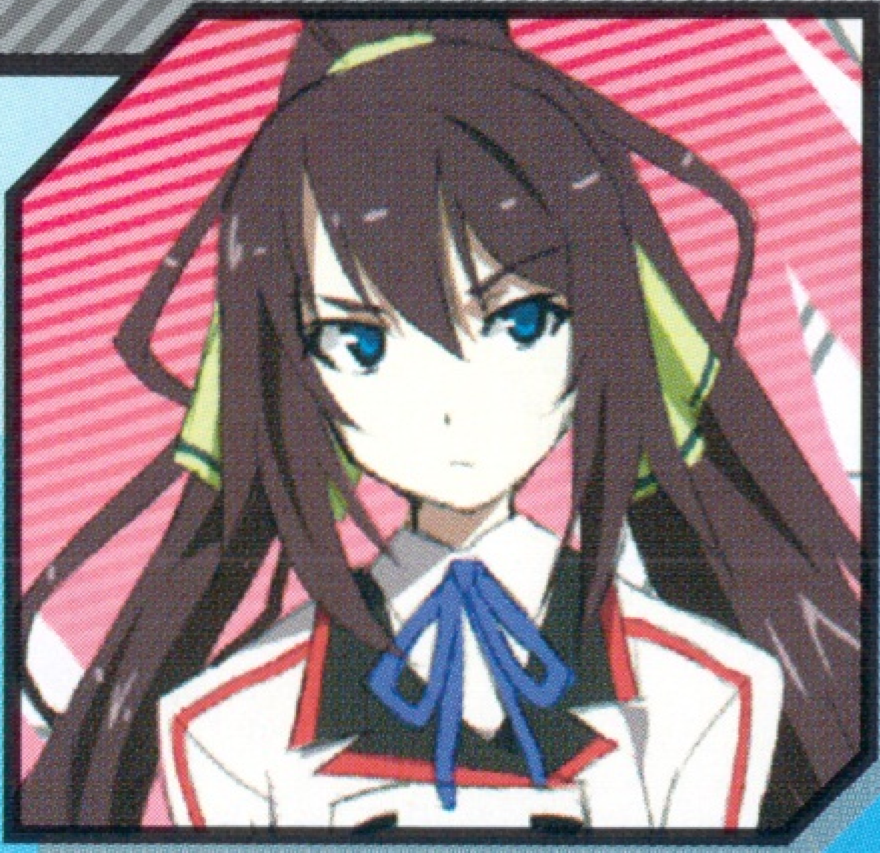
とびっきりのバスタイムを
召し上がれ♪

キャラクター紹介



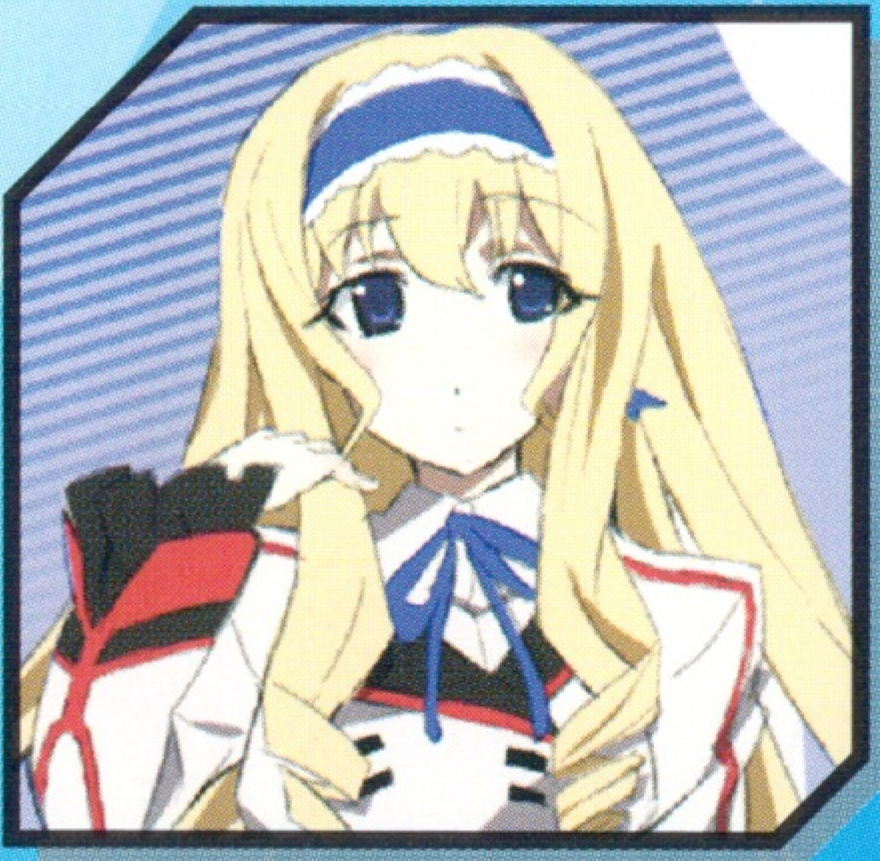
織斑一夏（おりむら いちか）

「世界で唯一ISを動かせる男子」。
専用IS【白式】。



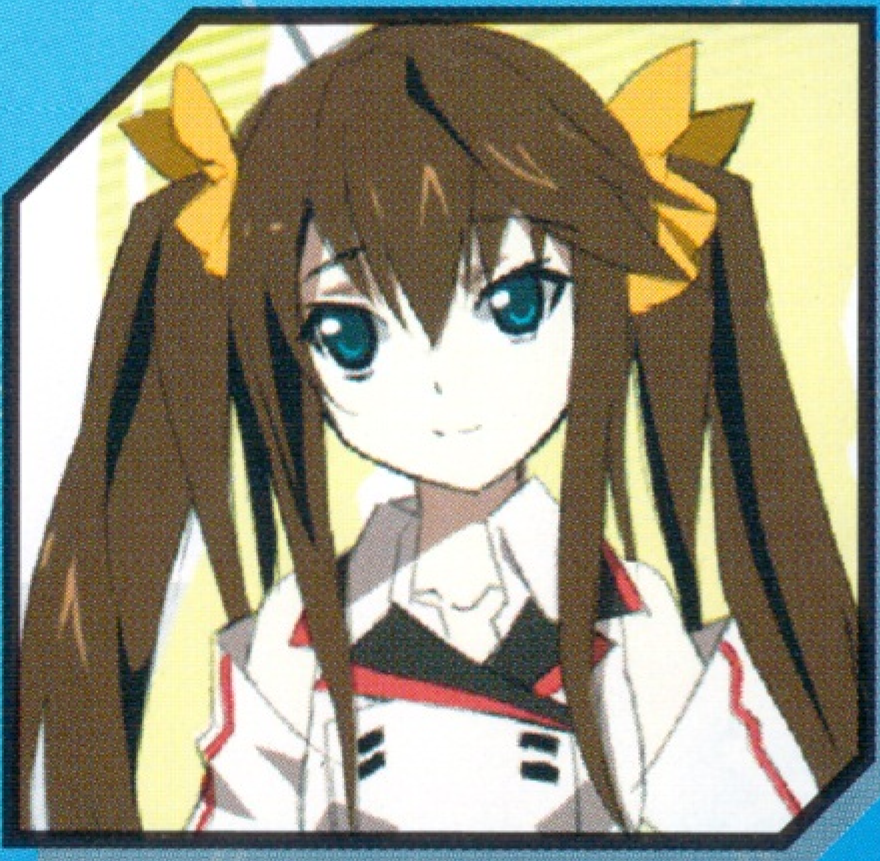
篠ノ之箒（しののの ほうき）

一夏の幼なじみ。
専用IS【紅椿】。



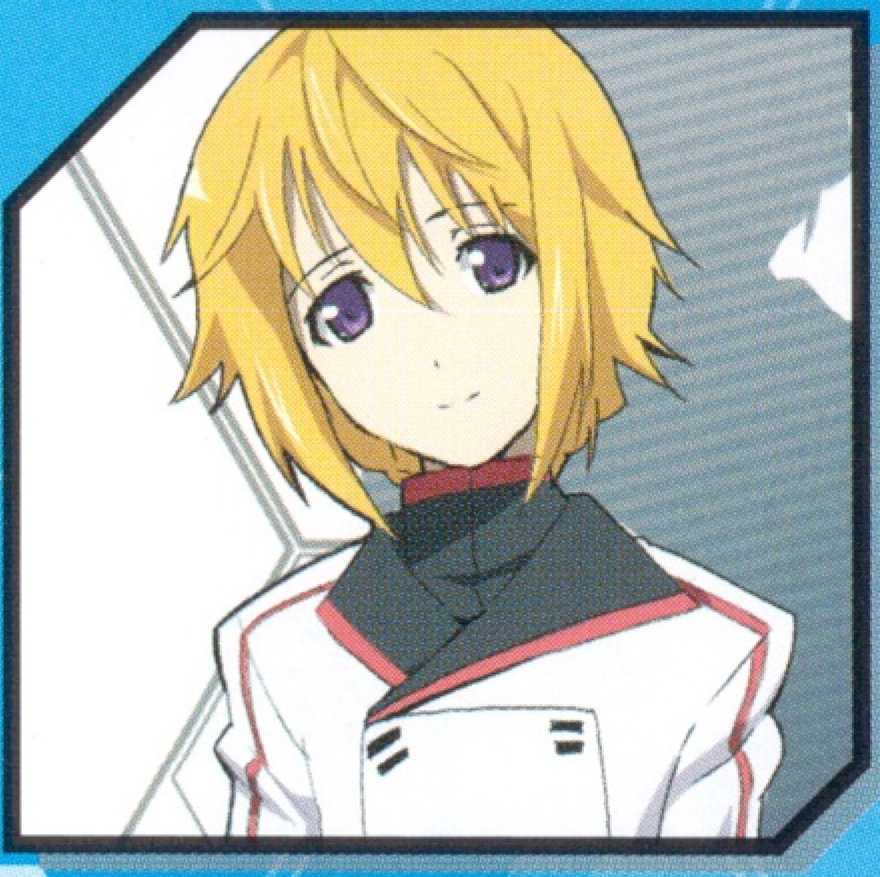
セシリア・オルコット

イギリス代表候補生。
専用IS【ブルー・ティアーズ】。



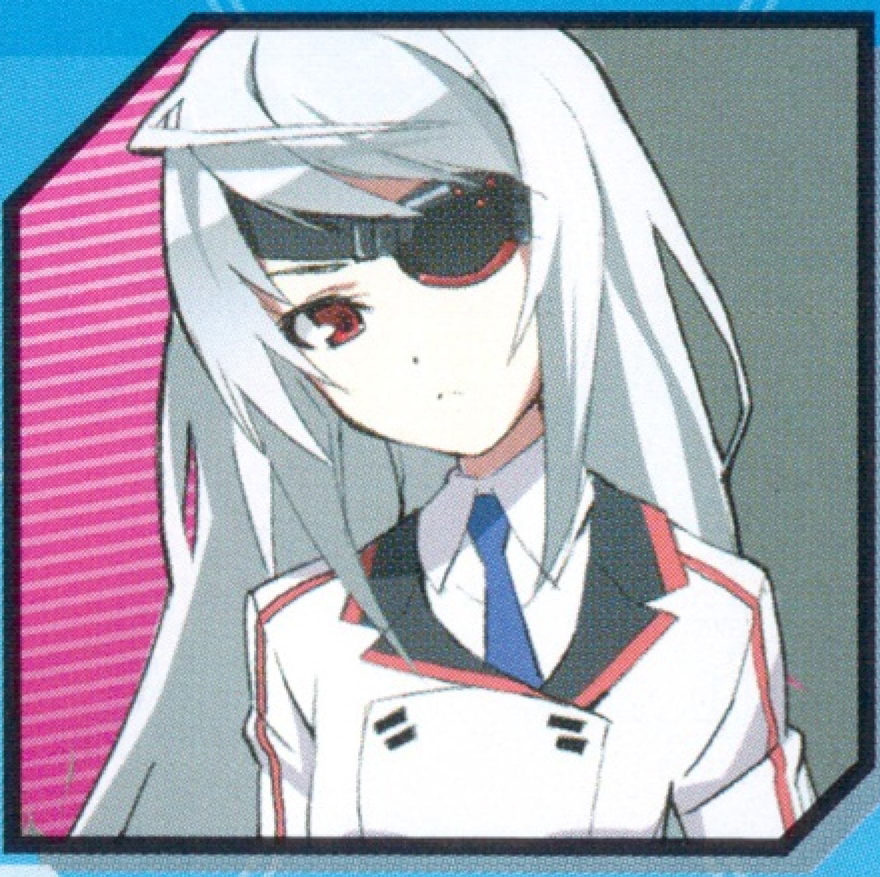
凰鈴音（ファン・リンイン）

中国代表候補生。
専用IS【甲龍】。



シャルロット・デュノア

フランス代表候補生。
専用IS【R-リヴァイヴ・カスタムⅡ】。



ラウラ・ボーデヴィッヒ

ドイツ代表候補生。
専用IS【シュヴァルツェア・レーゲン】。

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あとがき

6巻お買い上げ頂きありがとうございます。
いよいよISアニメ放送間近ですね♪
動いたり、喋ったり、恥じらう一夏や箒が
テレビジョンで拝めるということです。

制作会社のエイトビット様、並びに
関わられた全てのスタッフの方々が気合を込めて制作した
作品ですので、ご期待ください。

2010年12月　okiura

アニメ版鈴を
意識して描く
似ないいい
orz
倉嶋さんは
やっぱり神すぎる

CHOCO

INFINITE
インフィニット・
STRATOS
ストラトス

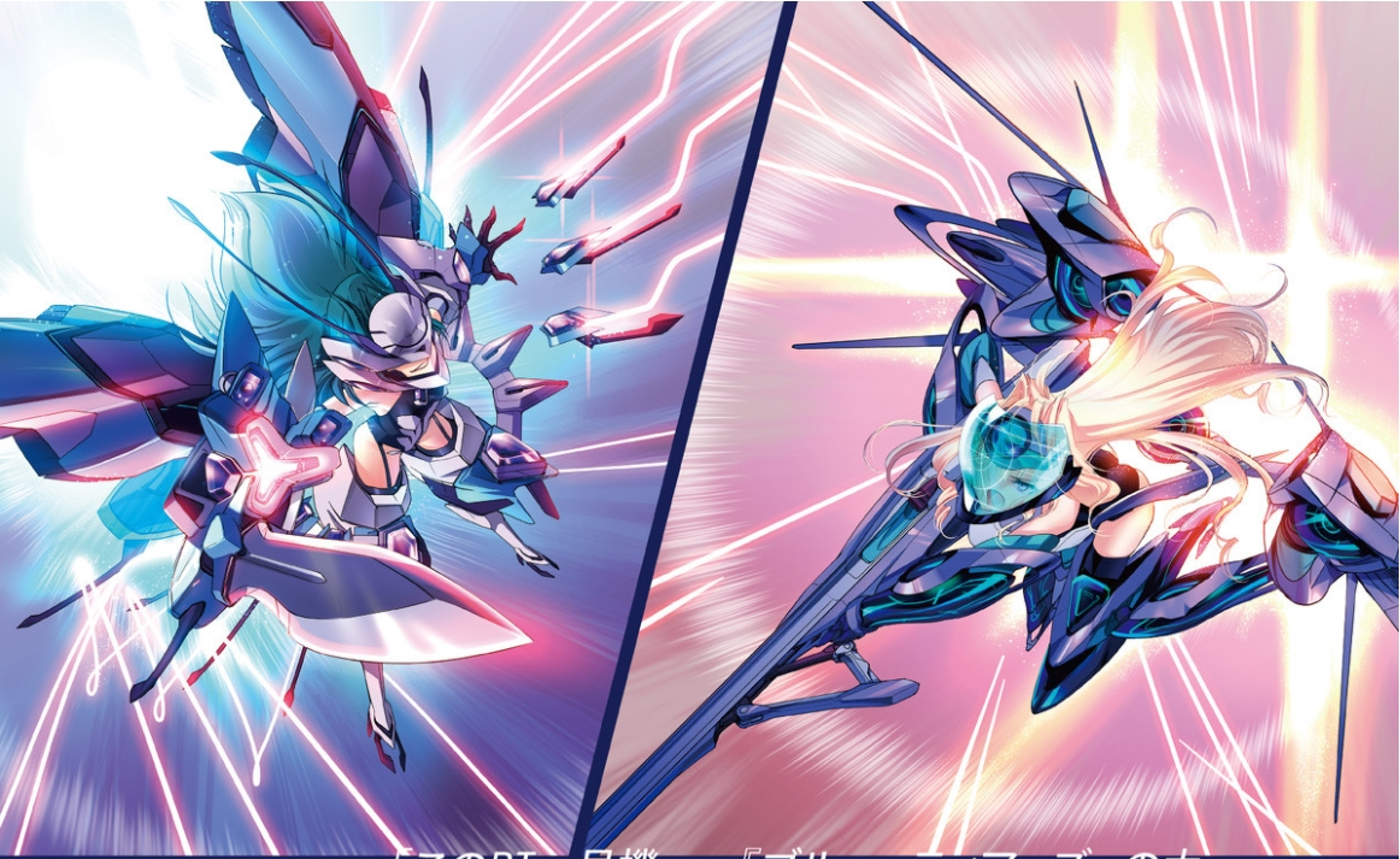
6

弓弦イズル
YUMIZURU Izuru

Illustration: CHOCO

OVERLAP

とびっきりのバスタイムを召し上がれ♪
Infinite Stratos 6: Visualization of Stories

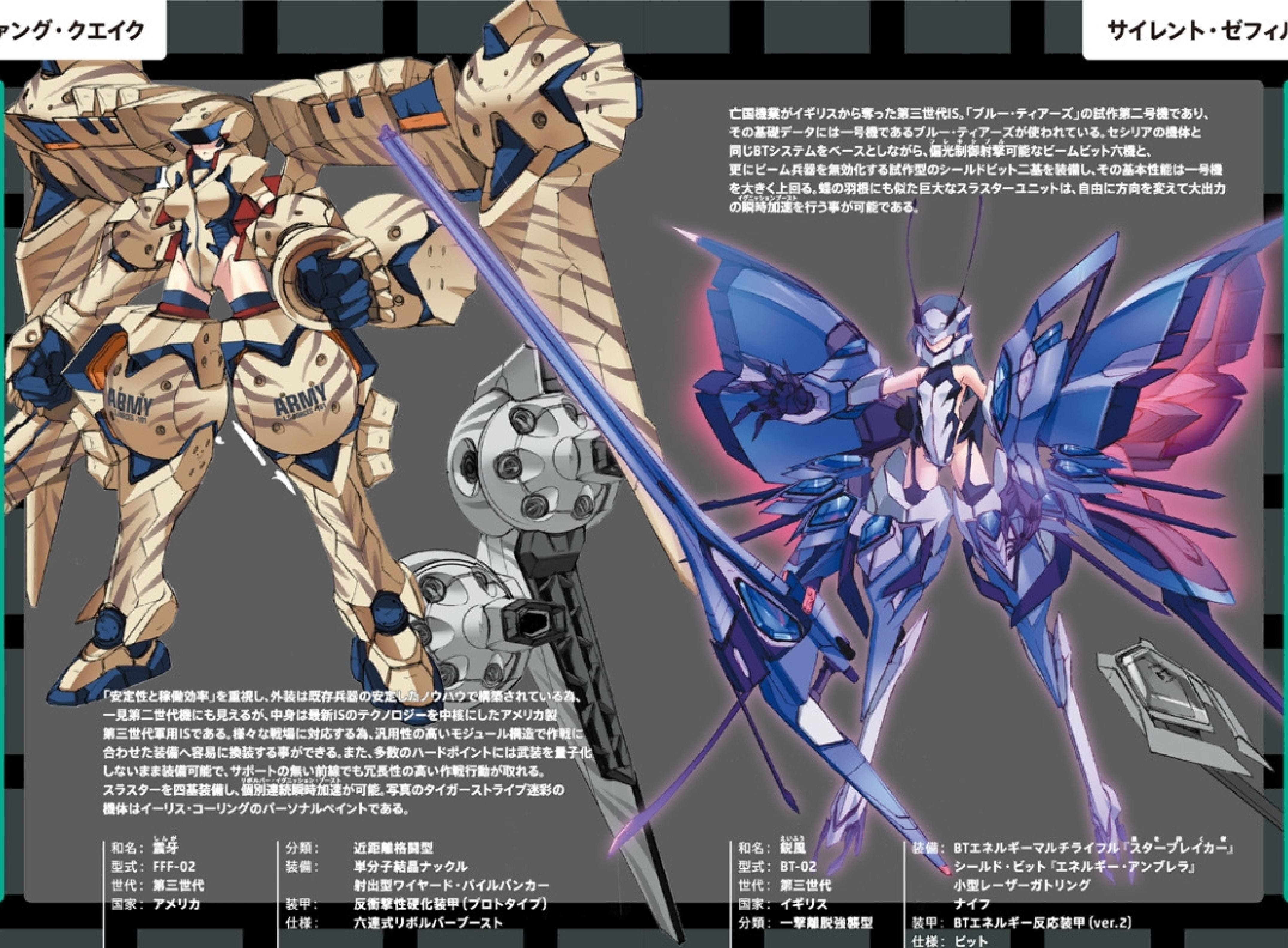


セシリア「このBT一号機　『ブルー・ティアーズ』の力、
存分にお見せしましてよ!」

IS
Infinite Stratos 6: Visualization of Stories

ファング・クエイク

FANG QUAKE



「安定性と稼働効率」を重視し、外装は既存兵器の安定したノウハウで構築されている為、一見第二世代機にも見えるが、中身は最新ISのテクノロジーを中核にしたアメリカ製第三世代軍用ISである。様々な戦場に対応する為、汎用性の高いモジュール構造で作戦に合わせた装備へ容易に換装する事ができる。また、多数のハードポイントには武装を量子化しないまま装備可能で、サポートの無い前線でも冗長性の高い作戦行動が取れる。スラスターを四基装備し、個別連続瞬時加速（リボルバー・イグニッション・ブースト）が可能。写真のタイガーストライプ迷彩の機体はイーリス・コーリングのパーソナルペイントである。

和名：震牙（しんが）
型式：FFF-02
世代：第三世代
国家：アメリカ

分類：近距離格闘型
装備：単分子結晶ナックル
射出型ワイヤード・パイルバンカー
装甲：反衝撃性硬化装甲（プロトタイプ）
仕様：六連式リボルバーブースト

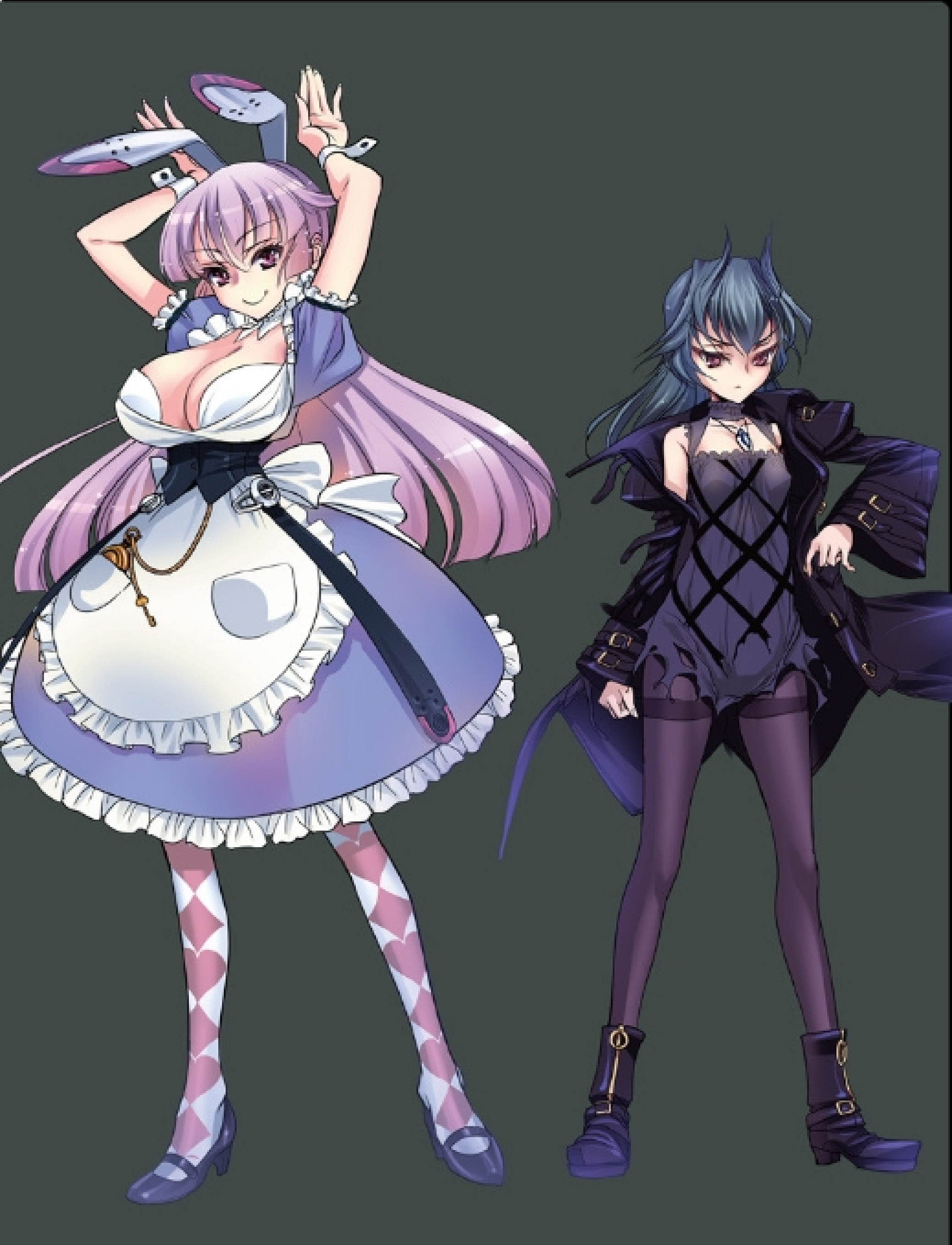
サイレント・ゼフィルス

SILENT ZEPHYRUS

亡国機業がイギリスから奪った第三世代IS。「ブルー・ティアーズ」の試作第二号機であり、その基礎データには一号機であるブルー・ティアーズが使われている。セシリアの機体と同じBTシステムをベースとしながら、偏光制御射撃（フレキシブル）可能なビームビット六機と、更にビーム兵器を無効化する試作型のシールドビット二基を装備し、その基本性能は一号機を大きく上回る。蝶の羽根にも似た巨大なスラスターユニットは、自由に方向を変えて大出力の瞬時加速（イグニッション・ブースト）を行う事が可能である。

和名：鋭風（えいふう）
型式：BT-02
世代：第三世代
国家：イギリス
分類：一撃離脱強襲型

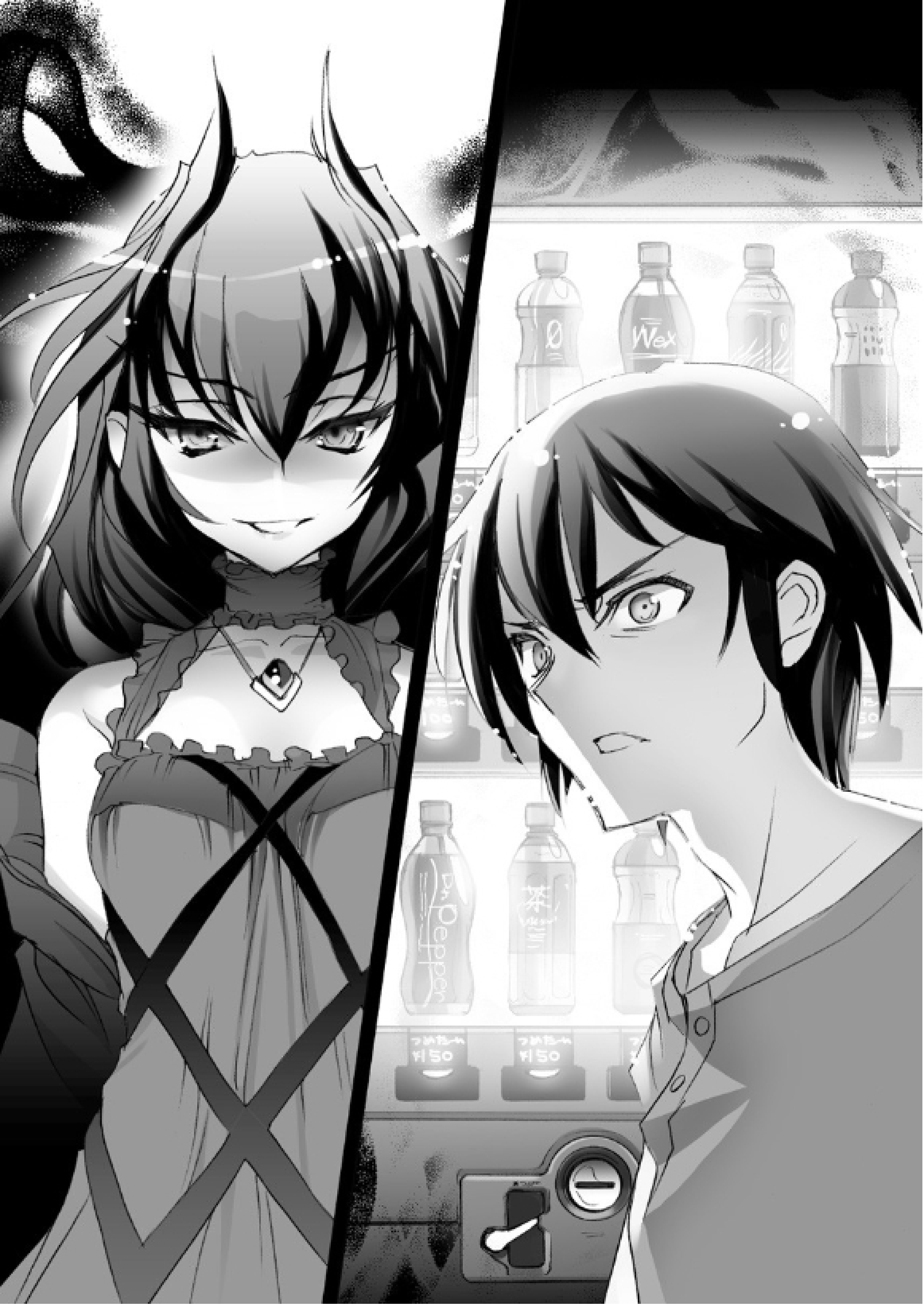
装備：BTエネルギーマルチライフル「スターブレイカー」
シールド・ビット「エネルギー・アンブレラ」
小型レーザーガトリング
ナイフ
装甲：BTエネルギー反応装甲（ver.2）
仕様：ビット



M Right

Left Tabane SHINONONO

88m
TP/A-
88m
TP/A-
88m
TP/A-15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茶
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件名

【祝】第6巻発売！

日付

：晴れ時々ゲリラ豪雨

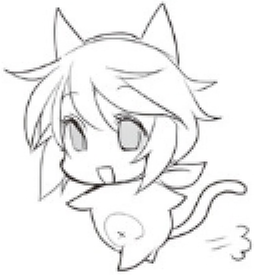
時刻

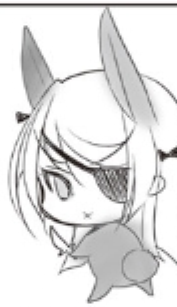
：めざましテレビまでは「今日」

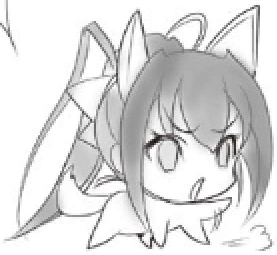
□ラフ　□クリンナップ　■あとがき

CHOCO
MUGITANI KOICHI

http://chocolateshop-float.com



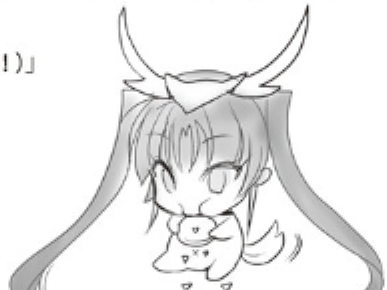


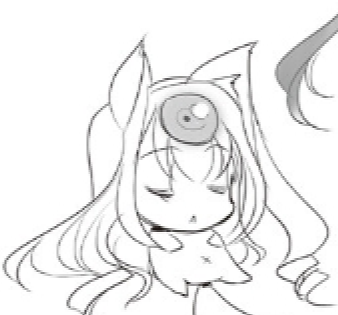


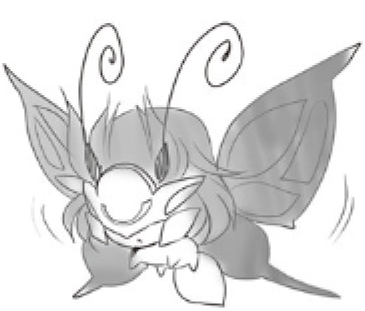
IS スーツのヘッドギアは動物の耳っぽくてかわいいよな。

猫「にゃーにゃにゃにゃ（そ、そんな事言われると…///）」
兎「うさうさうさうー（ふん。何を馬鹿なことを）」
狐「コンコンコーン（ばかもの！恥ずかしいことを言うな！）」
鹿「シカシカシ（この角は龍の角よ！）」
フェレット「ふぇれふぇれふぇー（鹿はそんな鳴き方しませんことよ！）」

蝶「チョー！（……氏ね！）」







Chapter 1: Silent Ones

North American Continent, American Northwest, Strategic Defense Point No. 16, nicknamed [Erased][6A 1], a place which even people with connections in the military would not know about, was filled with the echo of gunfire.

"Intruder Spotted! Urgent backup requested in area 6-D! I repeat, intruder spotted! Urgent backup requested in area 6-D!"

The echoes of firing assault rifles, the angry roar of sturdy men, the chorus of army boots: they were all directed at a sole intruder.

"....."

A lone girl walked along a steel passage.

That's right, the intruder was just a girl.

The girl neither laughed nor scoffed at the men; she just looked down at them.

"...Deploy."

At the sound of her unconcerned voice, rings of light started to gather around her whole body. Those rings of light gathered substance, and in a few seconds the girl's whole body was covered by clear blue armor.

"IS!?"

"That bitch, is she a member of the organization that was mentioned in the report!?"

The girl whose body was covered by the IS [Silent Zephyrs], **M**, armed her long rifle using only her right hand.

That gun, which could use both BT energy and live ammo, was named [Star Breaker]. Right there, right then, there was no one besides this girl who knew that name.

"What's your plan!? Doing things like this to the U.S. Army, don't think you'll get away with it!"

That was an angry roar which wasn't expected to get any particular answer, but **M** hid her face using the Visor-model Hyper Sensor, and stated her intentions, something nobody expected.

"Give me the IS that is sealed in this base - [Silverio Gospel]."

"What!?"

In a few, short moments, the soldiers collapsed one after another from the deadly bullets shot by **M**.

But the strange thing was, regardless whether it was possible or not, **M** didn't kill any of the soldiers. Of course she was using real bullets, but she aimed to just barely avoid a fatal shot.

What a hassle.... to not kill.

But **M**, willing or not, had to obey the restriction she was given by her female superior, Squall, when she was granted use of this IS: Nobody gets killed.

Obedience - was also not the right circumstance.

In her body, a surveillance nano-machine had been inserted, and if she disobeyed her orders, within a few seconds the core of her brain would be fried.

This was also a condition that Squall gave, so for now **M** would obey that order.

"Guaa!"

"Gyaa!"

"Damn! HQ! HQ! Requesting urgent backup! I repeat, requesting urgent back- Gahh!!"

Before long, when locking onto her targets started to become difficult, **M** casually floated into the sky, and started to charge and mow down the enemy using a rough movement.

Based on the map that was sent directly to her field of vision, the passage was to turn, go down, then go up.

"......"

At the exit of the rather tall passage - it was roughly 50 meters to the top - **M** located a new shadow above the route.

From the silhouette, it was a woman.

How would it feel breaking, breaking those ribs? At the instant she thought that evil thought, an arrow of light pierced her right shoulder.

"Wh....at!?"

At the moment she tried to pull out the feather-shaped energy arrow, it exploded spectacularly.

"Che!?"

Right before hitting the wall from the shock of the explosion, **M** rotated her body, and fired her thruster the other way.

But, the enemy didn't miss that half-second of stillness.

Byuin!

The next arrow attack was launched and exploded at her feet this time.

Even **M**, who was used to high-altitude high-speed braking mechanisms, couldn't completely evade this attack. It was an error caused by her self-conceit.

"You..."

"Natasha Fairs, citizen of the USA, IS test pilot. And also [Silverio Gospel]'s registered pilot."

Even while talking, the counter-attack didn't slow even a bit.

Both her hands held something that looked like a wing , and had a clear silver coating.

[Silver Bell] no.1 prototype, hand cannon version.

Natasha was using only her own strength to shoot the weapon over and over again, which when looked at in terms of output only, surpasses even the latest armament provided with the [Silverio Gospel].

While releasing *Energy Shot*, her beautiful blond hair scattered from the strength of the recoil, dancing intensely and beautifully.

"I won't give you that child....!"

Just like a mother protecting her daughter, her desperate attack continued.

But, even with all that, she was just using her own strength after all. She can no longer hit **M**, who started concentrating her senses fully.

"Ku..!"

"You're in my way."

Stepping on the wing, she mowed down Natasha with her left hand.

Don! With a loud thump, Natasha's body slammed against the wall.

"Small fry."

Natasha, unable to move from the intense pain on her whole body, was held by **M** in a headlock.

Their heights were different but it made no difference to **M**, who was floating in the air.

Natasha's arms and legs were hanging and swinging. Her bones were broken in at least two places. She had more than twice that many fractures scattered through her body.

Her limbs were powerless and swinging. But-

"Heh heh.."

The spirit that dwelt in Natasha's eyes had not weakened even one bit.

"Heh heh..."

"What's so funny?"

"I can only go this far. But, I've achieved my objective."

"...?"

While **M** was still unable to understand the meaning of the words, the passage floor started to give a roaring sound and crumbled.

"!?"

"I'll take back Natale[6A 2], Phantom Task."

From inside the smoke, a tiger-striped IS had just appeared, snatched Natasha away from **M**'s hand, and then stabbed a throwing knife into [Silent Zephyr]'s chest .

Against an enemy that suddenly appeared, even **M** had to back off a bit.

"America's 3rd Generation unit [Fang Quake]."

"Alright, and also US representative Iris Calling. I'll make sure you pay me back this debt, Natale."

While saying that, she threw Natasha, who would have hindered close-quarters combat, to the ground.

"Iri..."

"What?"

"Can't you see I'm injured?"

"I know. ...Just wait, I'll return the favor instead of you, and hit her twice as hard."

"That's not what I mean..."

Iris was looking curiously at the sighing Natasha; it seemed she really didn't understand what Natasha meant.

"I'll take that unit too, thank you!"

While saying that, **M** attacked, holding the knife backhand.

"Hey hey, Have you not watched it in a movie before? When the hero is giving a speech, you're supposed to stand and wait quietly you...know!"

Gakin! With the loud sound and flying sparks, Iris broke the knife with her fist.

The blade, broken from the handle at the base, spun away quickly and stuck in the ceiling.

"...."

"Just for the record, I'm strong, you know? Are you ready to be beaten to death? That machine you stole from England, it's still an experimental unit right? There's no way you can win using that against me."

Although the machine she was using at the moment, [Fang Quake], was also an experimental unit, judging from its abilities, it had the same concept as [ShenLong], which meant that it also stressed the stability and efficiency aspects of the machine.

"**M**, can you hear me?"

Squall's voice was echoing through **M'**s head from the IS' private channel.

Although **M**, who was in front of her enemy, didn't answer, Squall still kept talking, just like the rainstorm she was.

"I've already monitored the situation. Back off for now. We can't afford to lose the machine that took a lot of our efforts to finally get."

Although **M** didn't think she would lose, it could still take a while to finish the fight.

If the fight dragged on, other IS reinforcement might come too.

"Roger."

With that consideration, **M** silently and coldly answered.

"I won't let you run!"

While saying that, Iris used Ignition Boost to approach **M**.

But at the same time, **M** directed all her thrusters forward, and started a Reverse Ignition Boost.

"You're a clever one, aren't you!"

Although Iris said that admiringly, there's actually no such margin of advantage.

That's because, while **M** was doing Reverse Ignition Boost she was intently shooting Iris at high speed.

She was sniping during high speed movement using BT energy, and at the same time using maximum speed to retreat along the complex passageway of the underground base without losing her way.

"Stop right there!!"

Iris, while chasing, also had to evade the energy shots that were constantly targeted at her joints. Because of that, the distance between her and **M** gradually increased

. When there was only around 100m before they reached the end of the underground passage, there was already a distance of about 50 meters between them.

(This is bad! If I don't end it now, she'll escape!)

Iris concentrated her senses in order to invoke Revolver Ignition Boost using the machine 4 base thruster. Although she felt uneasy about the 40% success rate, there was no point if she didn't use it now.

(-Let's go!)

M, who realized what Iris was doing, immediately released her Bit and increased her continuous attack firepower.

"Uryaaa!"

Iris, who was no longer concerned about receiving some damage, increased her speed.

Her armor was damaged, her shield energy was decreasing, but Iris didn't stop.

"Got you!"

The distance was shrinking, and she extended her arm.

She got her. At the moment she thought that, Iris arm was obstructed by the Shield Bit's Energy umbrella.

Furthermore, it self-destructed with an explosion force even greater than a high-powered bomb.

"Whaa!?"

Stalling her with the Shield Bit, with the force of the explosion and the sudden stop from supersonic flight, **M** managed to escape from Iris.

When she saw the light of the sun, she disappeared into a far away cloud on the other side, only [Silent Zephyr]'s back side projected in the zoomed view mode.

"Aa, Damn it!"

She punched herself in vexation.

When the fist armed with [Fang Quake] collided with her other palm, the loud thick metallic sound echoed all around.

◆

"What? Ichika's birthday is this month?"

"Y-yeah..."

During dinner at the dorm, the usual members were having a meal while happily chatting, when suddenly Charl spoke up loudly.

Was it such a surprising thing? To think even Charl stood up, which was something unusual.

"Wh..when is it?"

"September 27th. Ca-calm down a little."

"O...oh."

Having said that, Charl returned to her seat.

"It's on Sunday right?"

This time Charl didn't stand up, but leaned forward. Wh... what's wrong with Charl today?

"It's on Sunday I think."

"I see.... Hm, so it's like that. Hm."

Beside Charl, who was murmuring while nodding at the same time, Cecilia, who had picked beef stew as her dinner menu, put down her bread and joined the conversation.

"Ichika-san, you should say these kind of important things sooner."

"Oh. Sorry."

I don't really understand what's going on, but I'll apologize first.

"Anyway, Sunday 27th, right?"

Cecilia brought out her pure white leather notebook and double-circled September 27th in it. Is this that much of an important event?

"Why didn't you tell me about this?"

Laura, who was sitting diagonally right from Charl's and my point of view, said this while frowning a little.

"Huh? I didn't think it was that important."

"Fuun. But it seems there's some people here who already knew but stayed silent about it."

""U!""

Glanced by Laura, the childhood friends duo stiffened up.

Speaking of the menu, Laura chose seasonal salad pasta, Houki chose the Sanma fish set menu, and Rin chose the Mabo set menu.

And for me, I chose the Dashimaki Tamago set menu. The dashi is superb, so this has become one of my favorite meals.

"I-it's not like I hid it from everyone! It's just that no one asked, that's all!"

"Tha-that's right! If I had brought up that out of nowhere, it would seem like I can't read the atmosphere!"

While saying that, Houki and Rin were stuffing their mouths with their food.

How do I say this, it seems to me like they're just making excuses.

"Anyway! September 27th! Ichika-san, make sure your schedule is empty on that date!"

"A-ah. Actually my friends from middle school already planned to celebrate it at my house. Do you all want to come?"

"O-of course! What time will it be?"

"Ummmm, at around 4 PM I think, since 'that' is taking place on that day, right?"

Having heard me say that, everyone gave a "Now that you mention it" face.

IS high speed battle race "Cannonball Fast", which originally was an international tournament, the situation is a little different at the IS Academy -

The Academy's students participate in that special event that's held by the city.

Having said that, to avoid the overwhelming advantage for personal IS users, the race is divided into one for normal students who use practice suit IS, and another one that is restricted to personal IS users.

This event, which could become a drill for those from outside the academy, is held at the city's IS arena. That arena, built at the coastal district, although not extravagant, can hold more than 20,000 people.

Once, it was used for an idol concert, but the seats could not be completely filled. Since then, there has been no application to use it for any kind of live concert. .... Well, in the first place, it was supposed to be used as an arena for IS.

"Hmm? By the way, starting tomorrow, there will be IS tuning for high speed maneuver, won't be? What are we supposed to do at that time exactly?"

ジト～

"Fumu. Basically, we're supposed to install High-speed maneuver equipment for our IS, but [Byakushiki] doesn't have it right?"

Laura informed us while holding a small tomato next to her cheek.

"Then in that case, you could do an energy distribution tuning or an adjusting of the output of each thruster."

Charl, who's chewing on a fried white fish, continued Laura's explanation.

"Fuun. If I remember correctly, [Blue Tears] has high-speed maneuver package doesn't it?"

"Yup! The unit piloted by this Cecilia Alcott, Blue Tears, which primary main strength is high-speed maneuvering, will embark with the package [Strike Gunner]."

"Fufun", Cecilia proudly pushed her hand at her chest. The other hand at her hip was posed perfectly, just like a model as usual.

Lately she had seemed to be feeling down, has her problem already been solved?

Lately, Cecilia seemed to be secretly continuing her training alone after school.

I haven't heard about the details, but it seems that the cause is that she let the enemy escape during the School Festival.

Laura wouldn't answer when I asked her about it. It seems Chifuyu-nee passed her no-questions-allowed principle to her.

Somehow, it seems yesterday's matter was even bigger than I had imagined.

The group [Ruined Country Weaving Industry] - [Phantom Task] had started operating over 50 years ago. According to rumors scattered in the electronic network, the organization was born during the second big war or something.

They're not affiliated with any country, don't possess any ideology, nor religious faith, and also have no specific race. Therefore, their objective is unclear. Their reason to exist is uncertain, and their scale is also unknown. Just like a ghost kind of organization, is what Laura told me.

The only thing known is that the organization is mainly divided into two parts: the Board of directors who manage the organization and decide the policy, and the Operational Squad which is filled with specialists.

And in recent years, their primary target have been ISs .

"However, what are they actually?"

I heard that the weapon that was used during that incident, [Removal], is a [Weapon That Doesn't Exist]. In other words, it's a certain nation's highly classified information. That mysterious group managed to steal and use that weapon that was being developed [Somewhere].

...Fu. I guess there's no use thinking about it.

At least for now.

Thinking like that, I return my attention back to the topic at hand, Cannonball Fast.

"That means Cecilia has more of an advantage then. Please teach me about Ultrasonic maneuvers sometime."

"...I'm very sorry. I can't do that right now. Please ask Laura-san to teach you instead."

Although she's smiling while saying that, I noticed her face frown for an instant.

Now is not the time for something other than her own training. - it's a face that seems to tell that kind of story.

"I see. Then Laura, please teach me."

"Okay. I will train you, who's lately been only preoccupied by that woman, personally this time."

By the way, the girl that Laura mentioned is IS academy Student Council President, Sarashiki Tatenashi.

A few days ago, Tatenashi-san, who finally moved out from my room, continued to give me a hard after-school training, as usual.

Thanks to that, my skills have been improving, but according to Laura, it's still that of [a Rookie whose safety device has been removed].

As expected of Chifuyu-nee's disciple, even her words are sharp.

"Rather, talking about having the advantage, aren't you the same? [Byakushiki]'s specs, maneuverability wise, is on par with a high-maneuverability type unit."

"Well, when you mention that, [Akatsubaki] is also the same, I guess," added Rin.

As usual, she was very knowledgeable about IS. She didn't show that part of her even a bit during the middle school days, but it's probably from studying extra hard since returning to her home country.

Hmm. Rin is amazing, isn't she.

"Anyway, what's my country doing? In the end, [Shen Long]'s high-speed maneuver package didn't make it in time. What about Charlotte's country?"

"Since [Revive] is a 2nd Generation unit, it wasn't developed further in the first place, so thruster expansion will be done to cope with it. Well, it was made for easy expansion to deal with speed related things from the start. It kinda feels like ,'[Raphael]'s name is not just for show,' I guess."

Charl's beloved unit, Revive's, official name is [Raphael-Revive][6A 3].

I see, I also agree.

"Fuun, what about Laura's country? Your IS is a 3rd generation unit, right?"

"It will use the adjusted high-speed maneuver pack from its sister unit [Schwarzer Zweig]. Since that unit stays in the home country, the development of the equipment is also being continued."

Once the topic changed to IS' technical discussion, everyone's face becomes serious, as expected.

"[Schwarzer Regen]'s sister unit, huh? What kind of weapons is it equipped with?"

"Even though you're my wife, I can't tell you that. It's highly classified information."

Zweig - means [Branch] in German. Since it's a pair unit with Laura [Regen][6A 4], it's probably also an all-range IS, equipped with AIC.

"Fuun. So you're now able to make a nice expression, aren't you Rookie?"

Smile, Laura's mouth tip raised while gazing at me.

"I humbly accept your praise happily, Lt. Commander-dono."

I, who understands Laura's personality enough to joke back and forth with her, replied to her with jestful words.

Laura, who was in a bad mood until a while ago from talking about Tatenashi-san, is now cheerfully smiling - although her eyes still emit cool-headedness.

The ice from Germany - Laura Bodewig. Her cold eye is piercingly sharp like icicles, but beautifully clear.

"We haven't seriously practiced for a while, have we? Tomorrow after school, starting from 16:00, we will train for real battle preparations at arena no. 2. Got it?"

"Roger. I have to warn you, this time it won't be a one-sided game anymore."

"Fufun. Are you sure about that? I'll also show you my new equipment tomorrow."

Saying that, Laura turned her fork around.

The pointed end of the fork then thrusted at the macaroni in the salad pasta right at the hollow part.

"Let's expect the training to be meaningful..."

Maca-

""To the macaroni""

"Is what you want to say, right?"

"You were gonna say that, right?"

Rin and Charl read my mind first.... Ugh.

"Ha ha ha, that's impossible."

"Ichika, you..."

Ooh. Houki is giving me a cold look.

No! It wasn't me! It just surfaced in my mind! It's not my fault!

"Ma-, Let's leave aside a certain idiot."

An idiot, indeed. Sheesh.

"Ichika, has the borrowing agreement you have with the Student Council been put in motion?"

"Hmm? Last I heard, it seems they're currently drawing lotteries and making adjustments for that."

"Fuuun..."

Rin said that like it's not important, then stuffed her mouth with her Mabo Tofu, which is covered with a lot of Layou on top.

"By the way, I heard everybody already had joined a club now?"

A few days ago, word of it reached my ears. Since it's a good chance, let's confirm it now.

"I had already joined the Kendo club in the first place."

As a ghost member though, right? Although it seems lately Houki often attends to it. I'm sure it's because the club captain nudged her during the School Festival. Such a troublesome girl.

"What about you, Rin?"

"L-lacrosse."

"Heeey! Lacrosse, huh? It kinda suits you, doesn't it!"

Especially the stick wielding part. ... although I won't say it even though my mouth's split.

"I-I guess so. I'm considered a promising rookie newcomer, you know. What a hassle, right?"

Indeed. When talking about personal unit IS pilots, their physical capabilities are generally superior compared to normal students. I nodded in agreement when Rin's figure running along the ground floated into my mind.

"Then, what about Charl?"

"Huh? Me?"

"Yeah. Which club did you decide to enter?"

"Ummm, that's...."

"?"

Is it something that is hard to say? Charl is playfully fidgeting her fingers.

At times, it looked like she was checking my reaction by shooting me upward glances, then returning her line of sight downward.

"I-it's... the Cooking club."

"Cooking Club! Oh, the one that we visited when we walked around together during School Festival, wasn't it ?"

"Waa, Ichikaa! Shhh! Shhh!"

Hmm? Why is Charl giving the "Don't tell anybody!" gesture?

I don't know why but somehow from the table in the back, I managed to hear the sound of people standing up from their seats.

"Huh, Cooking club is it?"

"Y-yeah. I want to learn to cook Japanese food."

"I see. Once you can make it, please let me have a taste."

"Y-yeah! Of course!"

Charl is nodding strongly while saying that. Her voice is loud enough to make her really look like a different person from the girl who was making the "your voice is too loud" gesture earlier.

"And? What about Cecilia?"

"Of course I joined the Tennis club, the sport that was born in England."

"Hmm, could it be you've played it since you were in England?"

"It's just as you say. Ichika-san, if it's okay with you, how about we play together next time?"

"Hmmm, but I've never played tennis before."

"T-then...!"

Her previous downed spirit seems to have gone somewhere else. Cecilia elegantly put her hands together and continued her words

"...How about I personally teach you? S-specially."

"Ooh, that sounds good. Then I'll be in your care when the time comes."

"Yeah!"

Seeing Cecilia's smiling face, I feel a little relieved.

Truth be told, lately there's been suspicion that Cecilia had started to close herself off from others, but if she can smile like this, there's no need to be worried anymore, right?

"By the way, I'm in the Tea Ceremony club."

Laura, who just said that, seems to have just finished her pasta.

"Tea Ceremony club, huh? Laura likes Japanese culture , don't you? ....Huh? Which reminds me, wasn't the tea ceremony club's advisor - "

"The Instructor... no, it's Orimura-sensei."

That's right. I feel like I've heard about it before.

Chifuyu-nee female student fans were rushing at once to sign up to the club, then got sieved by being forced to do *seiza* for 2 hours or something.

Hmm? Even so, Chifuyu-nee and tea ceremony club looks like a strange combination to me. I always thought she would become the advisor of a sports club instead.

"Laura, are you alright when doing *seiza*?"

"Of course. This level of numbness is nothing compared to torture."

Well, don't compare it please. What do they do during torture anyway?

"But, I can't imagine at all Laura's figure while wearing kimono. Show me sometime please."

"W-what? I-I see... okay then, if there's a chance, that is ."

For Laura to wear kimono, she would have to tie up her long hair, wouldn't she? I think that it would somehow fit her nicely.

"Having a ribbon would be nice, wouldn't it.... let's buy one next time."

"Hmm? You would specially buy it?"

"Don't mind it. It's not like there won't be any more chances to wear it from now on."

"Fuun. Is that so. ...Ooo, if it's a kimono, it would be nice to wear it during hatsumode, wouldn't it? Ah, but are you going to go back to your own country during New Year's Eve?"

"N-no. I'll stay in Japan. ... since you're also here."

She muttered the last part so I couldn't hear it that well , but it looks like Laura will be in Japan during New Year's Eve.

"Oh, then everyone, let's all go together. Let's do it from the New Year's Eve bell while we're at it."

It seems like it would be more fun if there are more people coming after all.

"Oh, but what will everyone do during New Year's Eve? Will you return to your country after all?"

"I will stay."

The one who's speaking is Charl. As expected of Laura's best friend.

"T-then I will also stay."

"Well, there's nothing interesting even if I went back anyway."

Cecilia and Rin continued. Then that means only Houki is left - or so I thought, but I unintentionally realized something.

"Houki is going to help out at the shrine again, right? You also did that during the summer break, didn't you? Next time, once you're finished helping, why don't the two of us....(;)

"Y-You idiot!"

Beshi! I was hit by Houki.

"Ouch! What was that for!!"

"Sh-sh-shut up! Don't say it so lightly!"

"[Next time]?"

The ones who asked were back are Rin, Cecilia, Charl, Laura - Wait, that's everyone beside Houki isn't it?

"Ichikaa! Fess up what you did during summer holiday!"

"Ichika-san! To do that kind of thing with Houki-san - I've misjudged you!"

"I-Ichika? What do you mean by 'next time'...?"

"To do something sneakily and hide it from me.... Unforgivable."

Those four are standing up while making "Gatata" noises.

"Waaa! Wait, wait! It's not like we did anything wrong. .. Isn't that right, Houki? Right?"

"...Why do you deny it that much..."

"Wha?"

Bashin! My head is struck.

Since Houki had also just finished her meal, she stood up while carrying her meal tray and ran away.

Hey, wait! Don't leave me alone in this situation!

"Then, since I've also finished eating, I'll return to my roo - Bube!"

Rin caught me just as I was about to stand up, and returned me to my seat.

It hurts, you know! But faster than me retorting that, the 4 of them start to get near me.

"Ichika! What happened during Summer Holiday?!"

"I demand an explanation!"

"Not fair. Ichika is playing favorites."

"It seems your damn body needs to experience my teachings once more."

W-wait! Please wait! Wa-Gyaaa!!

◆

"Fuun... Ichika is an idiot."

Houki, who already returned to her room, closed her door and leaned on it.

Luckily, her roommate Takazuki Shizune is still out so she can relax without reserve.

"Once it's over let's again, together..."

She recalled Ichika's words.

Tokun. Her heart started to throb.

His words reminded her about the summer. Just that is enough to make her heart start throbbing.

Her heart was throbbing violently, and her face reddened.

M-My training is not enough...

While suppressing her hot cheeks with her hands, Houki replayed the Shinonono sword style movements in her head.

Calm down, calm down. She repeated those words over and over again.

She repeats the movements she has learned in her head. She then compares those with the movements she remembers in her memories to ascertain her current mastery level.

That's right. The footwork should be faster, the rush should be deeper...

The figure of her father holding a real sword is strong and reassuring.

In his flowing movement, a certain sharpness could be felt.

As I thought, master is amazing.

Her real father, and also her sword teacher, Shinonono Ryuuin, is Houki's target.

She genuinely admires his ability.

Thinking about it, her father never got agitated, unlike Ichika.

As a man, he should have been able to profoundly set up things, shouldn't he?

Once she started thinking that, suddenly the image in her head of the person doing the training changed from her father to Ichika.

The Ichika in her imagination is sturdy, strong, clever, and keen. Furthermore, his conviction is strong, and there's no maliciousness in him at all.

No way! No way! That's wrong! He's not that splendid !

Bun *Bun*, she shakes her head.

Her ponytail, which wriggled while she shook her head, somehow looking like the tail of a sprinting horse.

"Shinonono-san, I can't get in unless you move away from the door."

"Uwaa!"

Called by the voice on the other side of the door, making Houki jump up and move away from the door.

"At last, I can get in."

"S-Sorry.."

"It's alright, don't sweat it."

Shizune smiles while saying that, then sits on her own bed and starts opening a paperback book.

The title of the book is "Everything You Need to Become A Soldier". Incidentally, the whole book is American taste's Comedy.

Contrary to her too-serious personality, Shizune likes this kind of books that are filled with trivial jokes that contains good meaning. The reason seems to be "my feelings become direct when reading these books."

"By the way, Shinonono-san.."

"W-What is it?"

"Another complaint. Personal IS users group is monopolizing Orimura-kun again."

"Even if you say that to me...."

"Ah, but it will start soon, won't it? The lending of Orimura-kun to the clubs?"

A few days ago, Ichika, who just entered the Student Council Executive Club, will from now on, under the guise of helping every club, be lent to do general routine tasks for them.

"Now is the time to operate ISs, even if just a little". Although there's a lot of that kind of objections, in the end, the Student Council President Sarashiki Tatenashi's "Now, now, the club with the most favorable attitude will get prioritized in borrowing Ichika" devilish murmur made everyone return to their seats at once.

Really, that person is..... Geez...

But, Houki is also a member of Kendo club. The thought of Ichika coming during club activities honestly made her very happy.

Seeing my gallant figure, Ichika will surely...

She shakes off her hand to erase the delusion that surfaces in her mind.

That's not it! That's not it all, umm.... I mean, that's....

'That's not something that people know anyway,' is the excuse she gave herself, but suddenly she starts to feel guilty.

Uuu.... I'm not like that. I'm definitely not like that. I'm not a woman who would think about superficial things like-

"Shinonono-san."

"W-What is it!?"

"Are you okay? You're making such a serious face, you know?"

"I, I'm okay. No problem at all. "

"I see."

Giving that short reply, she then returned to read her book.

For Houki, she feels that Shizune's no different than usual attitude on the contrary points out her unnatural attitude, and somehow she feels deeply embarrassed by that.

Uuu, it's Ichika fault… It's all Ichika's fault…

That was a complete burst of anger, but that day, Houki's mind kept wandering around that thought, until she finally went to sleep.

◆

"That was horrible..."

Finally released from the hellish interrogation of those four, I scurried back to my room cautiously.

"Welcome home. Ah, sorry to intrude."

"Tatenashi-san.."

Gaku! I reflexively hung my head.

Sarashiki Tatenashi. IS Academy Student Council President. The woman who holds the title of the strongest among the student body. One class year ahead of me.

Her personality could be described as wild, or maybe whimsical. She's a very cat-like person.

Somehow, I have the feeling that she's gotten used to opening my room's door lock now. She is currently lying in the bed while reading a fashion magazine.

"......"

"What's the matter? Ah, could it be that you're peeking at my underwear?"

"W-Well excuse me! Please don't flap your feet like that when you're wearing a skirt! I might see it even though I don't mean to, you know!"

"Fuun. So, did you see it?"

"U!"

"A question for you. The color of Tatenashi onee-san's underwear is...?"

"Pink."

"Aha. Ecchi."

Aaagh, this person is really...!

No matter what happens, it seems that she wants to tease me. Every time she visits my room it becomes like this.

"Now then, I've come today because there's something we need to talk about."

"What is it..."

"Don't be so paranoid. It's a pretty serious topic. It's about the aforementioned group."

Aforementioned group - that can only means one thing : Phantom Task.

My mood suddenly tensed up, unlike a moment ago.

"It's still informal information, but it seems that just a short while ago, the United States' IS maintenance base was raided. Their target was the IS, itself, it seems. Ichika-kun should be careful too, or else your IS might be snatched away as well."

"Okay. I won't be caught by the same trick twice."

"Very good. Boys should be like that."

"Become a good enough man whom I can fall in love with", Tatenashi added.

Again, asking for something with such high degree of difficulty...

And anyway, Tatenashi-san's standards seem to be really high.

Her family is a prestigious one too.

Now that I think about it, I can't imagine any man at all who could match Tatenashi-san.

What kind of person could suit her I wonder.

"Ara, worrying about onee-san? Don't worry. Onee-san is also just a woman, I'll put up with the stuff that needs to be tolerated, you know."

"Haaa."

"I might unexpectedly fall in love with Ichika-kun, you know?"

"Ha. ha. ha."

Again with that joke. I can only laugh dryly.

"Ah, what's with that reaction. I'm hurt..."

"...But, you know, right...?"

"People who say that kind of things...I wonder if they need to suffer through tickling hell again?"

"Pl-Please stop. That was really painful."

And also, as a man, Tatenashi-san's voluptuous chest and tender thighs that were touching me while tickling were also very dangerous. That's right, that was really dangerous, for many reasons.

"Now then, I wonder if I should satisfy Ichika-san's bodily needs?" [6A 5]

Tatenashi-san is coming towards me while making a tickling gestures with her hands.

T-This is bad! I have to run away!

Knock *knock*.

"Ichika? Are you there?"

The voice which was suddenly heard along with the knocking sound was Charl's.... I, I'm saved!

"Y-Yeah! The door is unlocked so please come in!"

Saved from Tatenashi-san's tickling hell, I quietly go perform a Guts pose in my heart while thinking that.

"U-Um, sorry to intrude."

"Welcome."

"Huh..."

Seeing Tatenashi-san's smiling figure, Charl stiffens.

Her expression disappeared when I was looking at her face, turning into a blank stare, then somehow turning into a very scary, expressionless face.[6A 6]

"Ichika, what were you doing...?"

"Huh? What... we were just chatting."

"Fuun. Then why did you say that it was okay for me to enter?"

"Why, you say.... Huh? Charl, could it be that you're angry?"

"Why do you say that? There's nothing of the sort. I'm not angry at all, you know."

Aaah! I can see the angry blood-vessel mark & fire behind her back! Why! Why are you angry Charl!

"Then, it's time for me to go back. Charlotte-chan, please take your time."

"Okay."

Whaaat!? When the situation becomes complicated, you run away? Are you some kind of raid unit?

But, the world is cruel. The main culprit, Tatenashi-san , left the room soon after.

"Uuum...."

There's a sudden silence between me and Charl.

"First of all, please have a seat. I'll make some tea while you do."

"Un. But, there's no need to make tea."

"I-Is that so."

When I sit on my bed while at my loose end, Charl unexpectedly sits next to me instead of in front.

"U-Umm..."

"What is it?"

"No, that's, it's nothing."

Charl's voice that can be heard from next to me is very clear and piercing.

If words had attacking power, I might have become a honeycomb by now. Well, I will never know though.

Anyway, I didn't do anything wrong, but I shrink from the pressure of this silence. "To sit on a needle carpet [6A 7]" really describe this situation well.

"....."

Aa— Uu—

"Pu."

Suddenly, Charl started to strangely burst out.

"Ahaha. Ichika, really, I'm no longer mad. That's why, please, don't be afraid like that."

"Huh? Wh-.. Wha?"

"Because, Ichika is flustered just like a man that has been found cheating by his partner. That was really funny. Fu fu."

That laugh is a genuine one, there's no scope of distrust at all. It seemed like she really is no longer angry .

"In the first place, that's... why were you mad anyway? "

"Because Ichika is getting friendly only with Tatenashi-san."

"No no, that's just impossible isn't it. That person is definitely getting along with everyone too."

"...That's not what I meant though..."

Hm? What was that I wonder? I tried to grasp what Charl muttered with a very low voice, but it can't be helped that I can't understand what she said.

"A-Anyway, about the thing I want to talk to you about."

This time Charl, who suddenly began to fidget, started to question me while looking only through the corner of her eyes and playing with her fingers.

"T-That's, you know. I got a bracelet as a present before, didn't I? That's why, t-that's, a-also to return the favor that is, I wonder if maybe I should give you some kind of accessory as a birthday present, is what I was thinking. What do you think?"

Charl is saying this while being unusually restless, but she strongly said the last part while vigorously moving her face closer to me.

"Ah, the bracelet from last summer, wasn't it. But...."

I roll up my uniform and show my right hand. My personal IS [Byaku-Shiki]'s standby form, a bracelet, is on that hand.

"I already have this."

"T-Then!"

Charl is getting closer again to me with another vigorous move.

"H-How about a watch? See? It's convenient to have one, right?"

While saying that, Charl rolls her left sleeve up and shows her gorgeously designed, cute lady's watch.

"Heee, that watch really looks nice, doesn't it?"

"I-Isn't it!? There's, there's also a model of this watch that's designed for males. Since we're going to buy it, how about a matching - "

"But, I don't really use a watch usually. Besides there is one in my cellphone anyway."

"......"

Huh, wha? Charl became sulky while continuing to look at me. Huh? Wha? Why?

"Ichika, a watch is a necessity if you want to be a stylish boy, you know."

"I-If you say that...."

Somehow, I feel like I'm compelled to follow her advice. Why is that, I wonder.

"T-That's why, let's go to the front of the station this weekend. Besides, I also want to look for some clothes."

"I-Is that so. Well, let's go then."

"R-Really!? I-It's a promise! You absolutely have to come!"

Charl then held out her pinky finger after saying that.

Since learning about Japanese custom of doing Yubikiri Genman[6A 8], Charl seems to be strangely infatuated with doing this.

Since there's no particular reason for me to refuse her, every time I indulge her request to do it.

"Yubikiri Genman, anyone breaking the promise will have to eat a cluster bomb."

And every time, the settlement phrase is always extraordinarily scary.

Charl, how do I say it... she seems to be the scariest one when angered, doesn't she.

"Yubikitta."

"Alright."

"Ehehe. I'm looking forward to this weekend."

Even though today is still Monday? It's too early.

"Iii, Chiiii, Kaaaa! Are you awake? You're awake, aren't you! This weekend, how about we - "

I was wondering who the one that suddenly opened the door loudly was, but it turns out to be just Rin.

But, seeing me and Charl sitting close to each other, her expression suddenly stiffened.

"- What are you doing?"

"Well, we're doing Yubikiri to ..."

"I-Ichika!"

Charl hurriedly covered my mouth in panic. But, my words didn't escape Rin's ears, and her eyes started to shine.

"Yubikiri? Then, that means you made a promise for something? What is it? Speak up."

"It's about going shopping on weekend - "

"J-Jeez! Stupid Ichika!"

Geh, I'm getting scolded. Charl is saying "I don't know you anymore!" while turning away from me.

Why is it? Isn't it more fun going shopping with more people?

"Hahaan? Then, I'm going too. Please take care of me, Charlotte."

"Same here...."

In contrast to the smiling Rin, Charl is pouting. The thing about Charl disliking Rin - is definitely false, isn't it ?

"Then, let the three of us go out this weekend. Nfufu."

"Right. What about the meeting place?"

"10 o'clock at the monument in front of station."

Charl is saying that while still keeping her pouting face. .... Hey hey, if you keep making faces like that, I'm gonna pinch your cheek.

"Charl."

"...What is it?"

Pinch. Pinch pinch.

"....."

"....."

"Ah...."

Rin is opening her arms while shaking her head in disbelief.

"Ichika is an idiot!"

Charl stood up right after saying that, and left the room immediately.

Batan! The door being closed made a large noise.

"Ichika, you really are..."

"....please don't say it."

"...you really are an idiot, aren't you."

I'm really sorry.

◆

Uwa, Uwaaaa..

Charl is hiding her face while returning to her room at a fast pace.

Under her palm, her pink cheek starts to heat up.

I-Ichika, to suddenly touch me like that...... Uuu.... If only he had given me some kind of sign before doing that, then I wouldn't have left the room like that.

Truth to be told, she's still upset, and is in the process of cooling herself off from being genuinely angry before.

But, what's there is a 15-year-old in love. Being touched by the person she liked, the thump of her hopping heart is larger.

Aaaa...., Uuuu....

Charlotte started to reservedly touch her cheek where Ichika touched earlier for a while, after making sure sure no one was watching.

Her love-stricken heart's fire already lit, and in the blink of an eye, her face is dyed completely red.

Even so, if only Rin had not come, it would have been a date just for the two of us...

If only Ichika had refused her request earlier……

For such a complaint to come out is something that cannot be helped on this occasion.

Of course, she knew well enough that favoring a certain girl isn't his personality at all, but even so - even so, she can't help but to expect it.

I wonder if he'll treat only me specially.

To hold such a cute selfishness is a maiden-in-love's special right.

"Haaa."

Charlotte, who had reached her room's door, unintentionally leaked a sigh while opening it.

"Chao."

"....Charlotte, remove this person from here right away ."

Uwaaa.

Charlotte firmly takes in those words.

What's in the room is the cat-and-mouse pair(or rather, more like Laura one-sided hatred) of Tatenashi-san and Laura.

Laura, if she's a cat, she is in threatened state, with her fur scattered, and her tail firmly standing[6A 9]. She has raised her eyes even more than usual.

"If you keep sighing like that, your happiness will run away, you know?"

"Huh, O-Okay, I'll be careful."

"Charlotte! Think about the way to drive her out of the room quickly!"

"Well, that's... Laura, even if you say that..."

Aaa, the dilemma of being a good-natured person.

Charlotte indeed hears the sounds of her happiness running quickly away from her.

"Please don't hate me like that, Laura-chan. Let's get along, okay?"

"Don't add 'chan' when you call me! There's no need to get along with you!"

"Ara~? If you say it like that..."

"Wh!? C-Could it be, you're going to do "that" again?"

In an instant, Laura's expression turned into a scared one.

While Charlotte was wondering what was "that" actually was, Tatenashi-san started to open her arms and move her finger in a tickling motion.

Ah, so Laura hates being tickled.

Tickling. That is Tatenashi-san's secret technique - or rather, her hobby to force other people to laugh.

"S-Stop it. You stupid! I'll retaliate seriously!"

"Nfufu. Now then~, how long will you continue that show of courage, I wonder?"

"D-Don't come any closer! I'm serious you know. I'll really stab you!"

Even though Laura drew her tactical knife, her right eye clearly shows unrest and fear.

"You can't make me retreat with just that kind of knife, you know~."

"D-Damn it.... if only I had a gun, then the likes of you wouldn't..."

"Fufufu, in a battlefield you would lose your life if you had a beef-stir-fry set menu, you know."

That was probably a word twist of "making excuses"[6A 10] wasn't it . Charlotte absent-mindedly thought of that trivial information.

This looks like it'll be over soon. Ah, I better prepare some hot chocolate.

She just recently found out that hot chocolate most effective when calming Laura down.

If a thick chocolate drink is brought to her, Laura will sip it like a squirrel while complaining.

"*It's showtime.*"

"U-Uwa.. Uwaaaaaaaa."

A couple seconds later, it was needless to say that Laura's anguished tickle-induced laughter is resounding inside the room.

◆

"Really! Why didn't you help me back then! Were you going to leave your comrade-in-arms to die? That's unthinkable in a sane state! It's not like the squad I was assigned with at all. No matter what kind of hopeless situation we faced, they wouldn't leave a comrade to die. The reason, that itself is the means to resuscitate the whole squad, it's a technique. In the first place - "

While complaining, Laura is licking the lukewarm chocolate that Charlotte made.

"Did you hear what I said!"

After gulping her chocolate once, Laura let out an angry roar.

But, Charlotte, who is already used to that situation by now, only answered "Un" while putting a comb through Laura's hair.

"Laura, what do you think about the new shampoo?"

"H-Hm? Well, I don't dislike the fragrance."

"Is that so. I'm glad then. It's the first time I bought the Lavender one, so I was really worried that Laura might not like it."

"U, umu... But, I, it's not like I like it, you know. I just don't dislike it, that's all."

Laura, who was made to laugh for a while by Tatenashi, is talkative as usual.

Lately, when Charlotte combed her hair like this, Laura narrowed her eye like a cat in a good mood. Sometimes, it seemed like it feels good enough to fall asleep while still being combed.

"Fuaa.."

Sure enough, Laura, who started to feel the hypnotic effect, was yawning a little.

The *nekomimi* pajama[6A 11] that she's also wearing seems to have already become a necessary item for sleeping.

"Laura, shall we retire for the night?"

"Umu..... let's do that."

After answering with a sluggish tone while nodding, Laura sipped the chocolate again.

Seeing that kind of behavior that looked especially like a kitten, Charlotte was spurred by the urge to hug her.

"Make sure you brush you teeth."

"I know...."

Laura, who was already half-way into the dreamworld , empties her glass then walks towards the bathroom.

3 minutes later, she returned and lay down on her bed, then crept into her futon.

"I'm going to turn off the light then. Good night, Laura. "

"Umu..."

Before long, the sound of Laura sleeping could be heard.

Charlotte let out a sigh of relief at her sleeping roommate.

It will be fun even with the three of us, right...?

Her feelings are already directed toward the shopping trip on the weekend.

Since she already confirmed the glittering bracelet on her left wrist, Charlotte starts her secret ritual.

Good night, Ichika...

Chuu...She kissed the bracelet. Charlotte, as if she wanted to hide her red face, pulled the futon over the top of her head and went to sleep.

Chapter 2: Resound, Maiden's Victory Song

"Nfufu..."

Seeing Rin, who's been in high spirits all morning, her roommate Tina muttered "Again?" By the way, what she was holding in her hand was a cup of deluxe, high-calorie ice cream.

Charlotte will be there too, but that doesn't matter. What's important is that today I'm going shopping with Ichika! In other words, it's a date isn't it? A date!

Despite the circumstances, she only thought about herself. That is the special privilege of a maiden-in-love.

"Okay, I've decided!"

Rin, who had finally finished deciding which clothes to wear, sternly picked at her choice up and immediately started to change.

As for Tina, she was already tired of watching Rin and is now enjoying the morning variety show on the holographic projector display.

"Then, I'm going now!"

"Okayyy, have a safe trip..."

Batan! One second after the door closed, the person that appeared before Rin's eyes struck her speechless.

"Good morning, Representative Candidate Huang Lingyin."

"G-Good morning..."

The woman was somewhere in her mid-twenties. She wore a formal suit, with those long, sharp eyes, covered by a pair of cat-eye glasses.

Looking only at her ambiance, she kinda resembled Chifuyu-nee, but the always-irritated-at-something face she makes is the critical difference between the two of them.

"I-Is there anything I can help you with....Candidate Supervisor Yang?"

An unpleasant premonition, an unpleasant premonition was sending chills up Rin's back.

Why is the supervisor who should still be in China here in Japan right now!?

That premonition surely turned into reality. Yang Lei Lei pushed her glasses up with her right hand.

"The high-speed maneuver package that is gonna be used for the Cannonball Fast, [Feng]'s preparation is finished. Do the [Set-up Implementation] and [Install Quantum Conversion] at once, then start the Trial. Start preparing."

"Wha!? Well...That's....Today, there's something...."

Yang's eyes only became even sharper.

"Don't make me repeat myself."

"R-Roger...."

Rin dropped her shoulders, took out her cellphone and quickly tapped out a message.

"Sorry, an emergency has come up."

That was all she wrote - or rather, writing that was all her feelings could handle - and then sent it to Ichika.

"...And, will the package this time also use the impact cannon?"

"The output level will be decreased and the the scattering method for close range use will also be changed, but basically it will still be used. New technology will be used for the added thruster. Get used to it as soon as possible."

"Roger."

As expected of a representative candidate, Rin flipped the switch controlling her mood quickly. She confirmed the upgrade package's specifications on her computer, Then headed toward the personal IS hangar while asking questions here and there.

Fuun.... The development team did quite a good job on the completion work didn't they.

Rin eyes were quite sharp as she thought about the IS application method. Those eyes that could be mistaken for a big cat's eyes were shining brightly.

Even so.... Aaah, I'm actually super out of luck aren't I......?

Her plans to go shopping with Ichika had gone down the drain. As a result, Charlotte was going to have Ichika all to herself for a while.

Kuu~! Ichika, I'm absolutely gonna get compensation for this from you!

The computer terminal that she gripped strongly, began to flash "Alert!" two seconds later.

◆

My hair isn't strange, right? Maybe I should check it again.

Charlotte, who had come to their meeting place 45 minutes earlier than appointed, checked her hair for the twelfth time while restlessly waiting for Ichika.

The hand-mirror that she brought out was a folded Wajimanuri[6B 1] that she intuitively bought a few days ago through an internet mail order. The drawing on it is a full moon and susuki[6B 2] on a hill, a perfect fit for the season.

While tinkering with her forelock, and pulling it left and right, she let out a small groan.

Somehow I can't decide.....

Actually, there wasn't any noticeable difference, but today, somehow Charlotte feels very sensitive.

After all, she would like the boy that she likes to sees her at 100%. That kind of wish is something that's very natural.

Even so, as expected, did I come too early?

Putting away her hand-mirror, Charlotte then checked the watch on her right wrist.

Fuu... It seems I´ve put too much fighting spirit. Let's relax a little.

Niko![6B 3] Charlotte practiced smiling.

But, unfortunately, two men who looked like [Travellers] saw that smile and thought that it was directed at them.[6B 4]

"Hey, little girl!"

"Are you free today? Are you free now? Let's go somewhere together~"

By the way, because each nation has undertaken the woman-favoring-treatment-system, men's social position has taken a sudden downturn and is in a bearish state right now.

But, as long as someone has fairly good looks = loved by women, commonly referred as Hosts and Idols, they are even more loved than before.

Since it became like that, just like this moment, the thought of being loved by an attractive woman is as natural of a thing as peaking, thus, this kind of pick-up came.

"I already have an engagement."

"Whaaat? It's fine, isn't it? Let's go play together~"

"My car is parked over there. Let's go somewhere far away! I'm going to show you a lot of good places using a French car!"

French - hearing that part drew a subtle reaction from Charlotte.

"Using a French car, with a bad fuel yield, on Japan's highways, are you? Heeeh, I see."

A 100% Rejection! The two men falter a little at the vicious words that Charlotte, using a max fake smile, spat out.

If there's a possibility that somehow or another, a problem is going to occur, Charlotte can make the two males into beehives in less than a second using her specialty [Rapid Switch].

Aaaa, I want to do it....

Imagining in what way she should shoot the two men, Charlotte massacred them 5 times in her head.

One of the men, who could still see "a pulse of life" in Charlotte's face, put his hand on her shoulder.

"Ouchhhhh!?"

In an instant, Charlotte jumped right just before she was touched, then twisted that hand hard.

It was the so-called CQC (Close Quarters Combat).

"Would you mind not touching me? It will be troubling if the cologne you stink off gets on me."

"W-W-Whaa...!?"

"H-Hey!? Let g-!!"

Frivolous Man B, who wanted to help his companion even during the confusion, was knocked over by a punch from his side before he even managed to finish his words .

"What are you doing to my companion?"

"Ichika!"

The gallantly appearing Ichika is saving her from the hand of the devil!

...Well, to say it like that might be a bit of an exaggeration, but it can't be helped because in Charlotte's eyes, Ichika's profile was shining.

Wow! He looks like a prince!

The fascinated Charl twisted the arm of Frivolous Man A, who she was still holding, even harder.

"Ugyaaaa!"

The nice sound that resembled something being dislocated and the man's scream was causing a commotion in front of the station that morning.

◆

"Forcing yourself onto women is against the rules, you know. Alright, come over here. Good work."

Saying that, the middle-age police chief with the oddly cool, deep voice takes Frivolous Man A & B away to the nearby police station. Thus, the morning's strife is settled.

"........"

"Um, Ichika?"

"Sorry I was late!"

Pang! I put my hands together strongly until they made a loud noise.

Charl, whom the apology is directed at, was looking blankly at him in surprise.

"Th-There's nothing to apologize for, it happened before we were supposed to meet anyway.....and that..., thank you for saving me."

"It was just the natural thing to do."

Charl is, as usual, being modest or rather being reserved and still seemed to feel extremely thankful for it .

To save a friend is just a natural thing to do, but to be thanked like this is quite embarrassing.

"..........."

"..........."

Sure enough, the conversation stopped.

Charl, sweating a little after doing that judo-like movement earlier, is fanning her face with her hand.

"Anyway, Rin sure is late, isn't she?"

"Ah! That's right! Rin won't be coming today. It seems there's some kind of emergency."

"Huh...Whaaaat!?"

Charl, who suddenly yelled out, drew the attention of people nearby.

Anyhow, it's Sunday, the weather is nice, and at the monument they're standing before of the station, there are a lot of other people who meet up here.

"That's why, today it will be just the two of..."

"That's troubling!"

"Huh!?"

"Th-that kind of thing, even if you say it suddenly... That's, u-um, things like preparation or whatever, I haven't done any."

"Prep...What?"

"A-Anyway! It's troubling for me!"

Huuh. Even if you say that...

◆

W-Why!? Why is Rin suddenly unable to come!? Why is that!? It's too sudden!?

Unlike Ichika who's before her eyes looking blankly , Charlotte's brain is moving at high speed.

[Rapid Switch], that two-word name is currently crying.

What should I do!? What should I do! Th-that's, t-, t-, just the two of us suddenly going on a date like this...

It should have been a great opportunity for her, as that kind of thought is right for a maiden in love.

W-What should I do!? What should I do!?

But, if she thought about it calmly, this was actually a chance.

Especially since she could use the leverage called "as a return gift for the bracelet from summer" to its full extent , there was no way she could let this chance to escape.

Charlotte crossed her hands behind her back once, and then felt the bracelet's presence.

And then she used all the courage she received from it at once to force herself to speak.

"T-Then, that's!"

"Y-Yes!"

"To-To-To-Today! The two of us will look around!"

"Y-Yes!"

Going along with Charl's loud voice, Ichika unconsciously raised his voice.

And with the people around them staring, Charlotte walked to the shopping mall inside the station with a blush on her face.

Alone with Ichika......Alone with Ichika.....

H-Holding hands should be okay, right!? ....or maybe not? Will he think of me as a strange girl? Aah, but, Ichika's hand is big and warm - That's not it!

That's not it, that's not it!

She shook her head and regained her composure.

Recalling the feeling of Ichika's hand, which she felt when they held hands a few times before, Charlotte clasped her hand tightly.

"It's not troubling!"

"Y-Yeah!?"

"It's not troubling, Ichika! Yeah! No trouble at all!"

"I-Is that so. Then I'm glad. Then, where should we start?"

"U-u-um, there!"

The place the confused Charlotte pointed at without looking was a lingerie store.

"Wha? Ah, well...I think that place is too much...."

Looking at Ichika's red face, Charlotte looked at the place her finger pointed at.

And then her face also turned red, and she quickly waved her hand.

"S-Sorry! That's the wrong one! That's not it! That's not it at all!"

"S-Sure."

The two blushing faces looked each other, and then both looked down at their feet.

Suddenly, Ichika who managed raise his head once again, saw a familiar face at the underwear shop.

"Hmm?"

"What's the matter? Ichika?"

"Well, that's... Heey, Raannn!"

Just as I thought, it was her, Ichika thought while called out to Ran.

But, Ran, who was called suddenly by a loud voice, raised her shoulder in surprise.

"Huh!? I-Ichika-san!?"

She quickly hid the underwear that she had just picked behind her back, and without knowing what to do, she stiffened for a few seconds.

Did he see it!? The place where I usually choose my p-panties....has been seen!?

Furthermore, it was the long awaited meeting after not seeing each other lately.

As a maiden-in-love, the feeling that if there was a hole right there, she would bury herself, dyed her face completely red.

W-What should I do!? For starters, I'll return this....

Ran stealthily returned the black and white striped panties that she hid on the shelf earlier while keeping it behind her back. The goods, which she found right during the stock change bargain sale, were of high quality and priced at only 1000 yen for 3. It was a very good bargain, but wasn't something that makes you happy when you are seen with it by the person you like.

-te, huh? Ichika-san is bringing a woman.....? And also....

It wasn't Rin, and it also wasn't Houki. It was a woman unfamiliar to Ran.

Uwaaa....beautiful blond hair..... She looks like a model.....

She unconsciously compared it to her own reddish tea-colored hair.

The Gotanda sibling's hair color is not a result of dyeing decolourisation. The tea-colored is hereditary, but to a maiden-in-love, that is a serious situation. Ran was overly conscious of Ichika, and in the past had pondered if she should have dyed her hair completely black.

A-A-Anyway, since I´ve been called, maybe I should approach them.

But, the aura that the girl standing beside Ichika - Charlotte - was releasing made her hesitate a little

It's okay! It's fine! I'm just using my status as a junior to attack!

That's right that's right, the small Ran (x5) in her head yelled.

That's right. In the first place, because of that stupid brother of mine, I lost my chance to go to the school festival too. This much is just a natural privilege to me.....probably.

After the festival, according to the info that she got from Teens Network (Girl's Only Information Network), it seems that it was a big event where Ichika was wearing a butler suit to receive the guests.

One time for when she found out that Dan had the ticket. Another one for when she saw the butler photo. She had planned to beat Dan twice, but what's here is the innocent heart of a maiden-in-love. There's no way just that much would be able to compensate.

But, it’s okay! This month is Ichika’s birthday! I plan to properly join the party!

Today she went shopping to scope out possible gifts, but buying herself clothes and general goods - especially panties while she's looking, around is a big failure.

She was being forcibly suppressed by the self-conscious feeling of being seen during an embarrassing moment, but from the maiden-heart squad's splendid activity, the suppressed territory was gradually being released.

-Un! It’s okay!

She clutched her hand and walked toward Ichika with well-regulated steps.

That appearance was the resolute appearance worthy of Private Academy Saint Marianne Girls Middle School Student Council President Gotanda Ran.

"Good afternoon, Ichika-san"

Niko! The innocent Girl - 100% level - smile was dazzling.

"Hey, you're alone today?"

"Ah, yes. Strolling and shopping."

"Is that so. -Ah, sorry about the matter from before. You must have wanted to attend the school festival, didn't you? Since you want to enroll there next year."

"T-That's right. If possible, it would be nice if I'm prioritized next time you're giving out tickets...."

Once that kind of friendly chat started, Charl was perplexed.

That there is a girl outside the school being friendly with Ichika...... truth to be told, it isn't amusing at all.

"A, um, Ichika..."

"Ah! Sorry! I haven't introduced her."

Saying that, Ichika cut his conversation with Ran with the best timing.

Charlotte, who can't help but feel happy, become high-spirited with a giggle.

Waaa, waaaa!? This person is really beautiful when she smiles. Uuu, uuu, don't lose, me! Go for it, Ran!

This girl is a junior, isn't she. I don't know what to say, whether Ichika is really indulgent or considerate to a junior. He's 20% kinder to them. Geez, even though I wanted him to be kind to me too...

"This is Charl. My classmate and France's representative candidate."

"Charlotte Dunois. N-Nice to meet you."

"Go-Gotanda Ran. Nice to meet you too."

In a handshake to decide who will have the aura of a winner, Charlotte had an advantage.

Feeling that smooth silk-like touch, Ran's consciousness blurred for an instant.

"Do you remember? During the school festival, you met my friend Dan right? Ran is his little sister."

"Is that so."

"Yes, it is."

"And, it seems that next year she will be accepted at IS Academy. She's going to be our junior at school."

"Y-Yes! That's right! Please do instruct me."

She bowed 90 degrees straight, and then raised her head up, slightly dizzy.

"That's right. I should still be able to hand you that ticket. Ran, did you bring a cellphone?"

"Y-Yesh!"

-Uwaaaaannn, I failed![6B 5] So embarrassing....

The cellphone that was just taken out was switched into direct connection mode, and then the ticket data got transferred.

"This is..."

"This month [Cannonball Fast]'s special reserved seat ticket. You want to see it right?"

"Ah, yes! Of course!"

"But, just like the school festival, each person only gets one invitation card. I'm sorry that I can't give your friends' share too."

"N-Not at all! It's okay! All of my friends are the type who are satisfied with just watching the relay broadcast."

"Heee, is that so."

After seeing the "Sending Complete" screen, Ichika closed his cellphone. A few seconds after that, Ran returned her cellphone into her bag.

U, u, if only I'd taken the character sticker off of my cellphone. He must have thought I'm childish...

As for Ichika, it just left "Ah, there's something cute attached"-like impression, but for Ran who wants to be seen as lover material, this is also one small failure.

R-R-Recovery..... I have to recover or else.....but, what should I do.... Charlotte-san is very pretty too, what can someone like me....

There's nothing like that-. Go for it-.

Ran, who somehow seemed to hear that kind of voice from somewhere, put forth all of her courage and spoke up in a strained voice.

"Ah, um! Is it okay if I join you to look around today?"

"Ok."

Easily ok-ed. Piling anti-climax on top of exhaustion, Ran lost her stance and was quickly supported by Charlotte.

"What's wrong? Are you okay?"

"Ye-Yesh....."

Uwaaaa, this person is really great! Just like a young nobleman! She's pretty, cute, and cool, that's so unfair! There's no God, is there?! Stupid~!

"Then, let's go to lots of places."

Hearing Ichika's carefree voice, both Charlotte and Ran nodded their head, and then respectively lined up at his left and right side.

◆

"One, two! One, two!"

"Taaaa-"

"Target confirmed! Fire!"

IS arena no.3. There, unaffected by the fact that it's a day-off, those strong students who aim to go even higher spend all of their time doing IS training.

"Haa.... ha..."

The one in that corner and out of breath was Cecilia.

She's making the BITs do a linked high-speed rolling shot in order to make the laser trajectory bend many times over.

But, she hasn't been successful in doing the [Deviate Fire BT Flexible] even once, and with each passing time, the fatigue showing on her face was getting more and more obvious.

"......."

Once again, she concentrated her senses, and she took a stance with her BR rifle [Starlight mk III].

Cecilia put the image of water in her mind, and then fired above the balloon.

(-Bend!)

But, Cecilia's effort was in vain. The laser plunged straight ahead, hit the screen shield and dispersed.

"Let's end it here for today..."

Fuu, Cecilia put away her rifle while sighing. The gun barrel in her right hand changed into light particles and disappeared.

".........."

Returning to the waiting room, nothing but gloomy things were showing on that face, only irritation and fatigue could be perceived there.

"[Blue Tears], standby mode."

Shrouded by light, Cecilia's feet slowly touched the ground because of the IS' release PIC.

For the time being, I’ll take a hot shower and at least change my mood....

While thinking that, she opened the door of the dressing room.

There, an unexpected person was standing.

"Huh? Cecilia? What are you doing, training?"

"Rin-san..... Well, it's something like that."

For some reason, Cecilia answered with an artificial smile towards Rin, whom she often hung around with.

It was different from just a display, it could be said that it was an action born from her pride.

Whether she knew about thoughtfulness toward someone she considered her equal or not, Rin smoothly let it slide and continued the conversation.

"I am going to do deployment training for the new equipment model starting now. Actually, I wanted to use arena no.6. Unfortunately, it was completely booked."

"New equipment model, is it the high speed package as expected?"

"Fufun, that's right. Just wait for it, Cecilia. Let's fight a good match on the appointed day."

"Yeah. I'll hold you to that."

Receiving the finger pointing of her rival, Cecilia's fighting spirit was burning.

Rin's 'throwing a written challenge'-like attitude could have been because she felt Cecilia's mental fatigue. Rin has always been sharp in noticing the subtleties of other people's feelings.

"Then, see you."

"Yeah, see you."

Rin waved her hand, and Cecilia returned it, not with an artificial smile, but with a genuine one, and then they passed each other.

I won't lose. Not to anyone in the academy!

Cecilia, her feelings renewed, entered the dressing room with quick steps.

◆

"Is there anything that catches your interest?"

"Uuunnnn...."

Gazing at the display in the clock shop, I let out a groan.

It can't be helped that I don't know which one to choose, I don't understand which one is good and which one isn't.

Even if I want to choose based solely on the design, somehow there's nothing that could intuitively catch my interest; That was my honest thought.

But, since it's a birthday present from Charl, I want to choose it firmly.

"We are also selling these watches here, how about it?"

"Ah, no, that one is a little..."

"Is that so."

The male clerk was also troubled by his inability to grasp my taste. ......Not good, not good. I have to do something.

"By the way, Ran, do you have any wristwatch?"

"Huh!? Well, that's...."

"Hm?"

"I don't have one..... I, I thought that the watch on my cellphone should be enough or something."

"Right."

While I nodded in response to Ran's words, Charl put both her hands on her hips and made a scolding pose.

"Jeez, that's not good you know. You two, especially Ran-chan since you're a girl, should be more stylish."

"O-Okay."

Which reminds me, Charl is adding a chan when speaking to the younger Ran. Ran is also adding san when calling Charlotte. It seems the seniority relation has already been created between the two of them.

"But, that's, a wristwatch seems to be something that can't be bought just using pocket money..."

"Ah, is that so. Representative candidate student's standing in general is something close to a government worker for a country, that's why we get an allowance."

"I-Is that so?"

That´s something that is very enviable.

"Yes. Ichika is still not a candidate student, right?"

"A-, yeah. Somehow the deliberation at the international IS facility has been prolonged."

"Fuun. Even so, it sure is taking a long time."

"Isn't it."

There has been no further progress even though it's already September. Just as I thought, being the world's only IS male pilot is the problem.

Probably, [Byakushiki], in the production of which Tabane-san got directly involved, might also be one of the reasons.

It's something like applying pressure so as to not let the latest technology get monopolized by Japan. It's seriously troubling, isn't it?

"At any rate, if we stay like this, it doesn't seem like we will decide on a wristwatch anytime soon, would we."

Charl returned the topic of the conversation to wristwatches. I really started to feel bad for the troubled clerk.

"That's right isn't it. Uuuun-..."

"T-Then, how about I choose one that I think would suit Ichika the most?"

"Ooo, that sounds like a good idea. Since Charl seems to have a very good fashion sense too."

"I-Is that so? Thank you. Then, I'll choose now."

"......"

Charl's expression was shining, while in contrast, a little worry was surfacing on Ran's.

Why is that I wonder?

Worried about Ran's gestures, Charl called out to her.

"Ran-chan, let's choose together. This is a rare opportunity too."

"Huh, ah, yes!"

"No need to worry about the price."

"Yes!"

"H-Hey hey! I will be the one who's troubled if it's too expensive."

"Fufu, why is Ichika the one worrying? You're the recipient, right?"

"No, well, it might be like that...but you usually hesitate when wearing an expensive watch right?"

"Then, I'll choose one that a high-school student can afford from a part-time job salary. Is that okay?"

"Well, I guess.... Ah, but, I'll make sure to give a return gift that more or less costs the same on Charl's birthday too."

"Nn. Thank you."

"Of course I will give a birthday present for Ran too."

"O-Okay! Thank you very much!"

After that, Charl and Ran took about 20 minutes to choose my birthday present. They brought a wristwatch to show me.

"What do you think about this one?"

It was a metal wristwatch that was white-based in color with golden-colored inlays. The golden white radiance is very pretty.

"I think it will suit Ichika better than a silver-colored one. See, the gauntlet on your right hand is also white colored, right?"

Hearing those words, I rolled my right sleeve.

The IS [Byakushiki]'s standby mode is a white bracer on my right wrist which fits very nicely with the wristwatch.

"It certainly looks that way. White style on both hands, huh?"

"I thought so, it looks great! Really!"

"Alright. Thanks for helping to choose it, Ran."

"N-Not at all! This kind of thing is just, a, a piece of cake!"

Ran was saying that, but unfortunately the watch was pointing at 12 o'clock. It was already the time for lunch.

Guuu! Her stomach was growling. Ran's face became completely red.

"Haha. Let's go to a restaurant somewhere."

"Y-Yes.... I'm sorry...."

Ran was blushing to her ears, which for some reason looked cute, and I ended up patting her head.

Charl hurriedly went to ask the clerk to wrap the wristwatch.

"Charl, where should we have lunch?"

"Uuunn, I wonder where."

"What about Ran? Is there anything you want to eat? I'll treat you."

"N-No! I'll pay my own share at least!"

"Don't say that. Ah, how about the outdoor café there? "

"Ah, isn't that place quite expensive though?"

"That's why I said I'll treat you. Ah, or could it be that you have eaten there before?"

"O-Only for drinks...."

"Alright, then it's decided. Let's have lunch there."

"O-Okay. Thank you very much."

Ran was still looking at her feet while playing with her fingers. She seemed a little uncomfortable and her face was red.

Somehow, it seemed like she's extremely embarrassed about her stomach growling earlier. It almost feels like I've done something bad.

"Okay then, let's go."

"Alright."

Charl, who had just received the merchandise earlier, led us to the outdoor cafe.

Ran and I followed her and entered the store.

"Heee, this place is really stylish isn't it. Today weather's is just right too, so the location is excellent."

Charl, whose hair is being brushed gently by the wind, smiled. That figure, which really looked like that of the daughter of a noble, somehow took me aback for a moment.

"Welcome."

"Ah, what is Today's Lunch Menu?"

"It's crab-cream spaghetti for today's main course, along with a pear tart for desert."

"Then, we'll order 3 of those."

"Thank you for ordering."

After that exchange of words, the waiter left.

I suddenly realized, Charl and Ran were fixedly staring at me.

"W-What is it?"

"No, well, it seems you're very well trained at this."

"No way, this much is just normal. I didn't eat out that much, so Chifuyu-nee told me to be able to order at least this smoothly."

"Fuuun."

"A, um, could it be that Ichika-san often comes to this kind of store?"

"Nope, I rarely dine outside. Ah, but I do eat at Ran's house, don't I?"

"Please don't put a set-meal store like ours in the same boat..."

"Why is that? It's not something to be embarrassed about, right? Gotanda set meal is delicious isn't it."

"That name alone is detestable enough for me...."

Well well, a teenage maiden's line of thought is really hard to understand. I thought it was something to be proud about.

"By the way, that's..."

While looking intermittently at Charl, Ran's mouth was mumbling something. It looked like there's something that's hard to say.

"Hmm?"

"I-Ichika-san and Charlotte-san, are you two seeing each other right now!?"

"W...Wha!?"

"H-Hey Hey, what are you saying so suddenly?"

"B-But, that's, it seems you two are getting along so well..."

"That's because we were in the same team during the tag match in the past. Right? Charl."

"Y-Yeah. More or less..."

Could it be that, from the surprise of that sudden remark, Charl's face became bright red while she nodded .

But, today's Ran seems a little weird. I wonder what's wrong.

"....Thank goodness. Not seeing each other yet..."

"Hm?"

"It's nothing!"

While doing some small talk, the lunch came unexpectedly quick.

The waiter brought 3 plates at once. Ooo, Amazing.

"Thank you for waiting."

The waiter said that and lined up the 3 plates. On those crab cream spaghetti, a crab claw was placed at the center of the dish. It really excites your appetite.

Tomato ketchup was entwined on the scattered pasta, and the smell was mouth watering. It made me want to eat it immediately.

"Well then, please enjoy your meal. I'll bring the desert afterwards."

The waiter said that and left our table. We took our utensils, and started to immediately eat our pasta.

"Itadakimasu!"

"Itadakimasu."

"I-Itadakimasu."

I, Charl, and Ran, in that order, put our hands together , then started to eat our crab cream spaghetti.

"Ooo, tasty."

"Yeah. It's written somewhere that this is raw pasta."

"It's delicious."

The free-refill mixed herb tea that is part of the lunch really suits the food too.

Since we're in the middle of eating, the conversation stopped temporarily, as we moved our forks.

Even so, this is really delicious. What do they use to get this kind of secret flavor in the sauce I wonder.

"Hmm? Ran, there's something."

"Yes?"

I took a piece of napkin, and gently wiped Ran's mouth.

"!?""

"There's sauce all over your mouth."

"I-If you had just told me, that's.....I, I would have wiped it myself!"

"I-Is that so. Sorry."

"Ah, no, well, um, it's not that I don't... T-Thank you very much."

Ran's face reddened and she hung her head.

It seems that I don't have enough delicacies towards a girl.[6B 6] I'll reflect on it.

◆

Uwa, uwa, uwawa.....

Ran is replaying the scene from a moment ago while holding her pounding heart with a hand gently placed at her chest.

My mouth was wiped by Ichika-san.....

Even through the cloth, that gentle fingertip's sensation can still be felt on her mouth - or rather her lips .

T-That's no problem is it? I properly put on my lipstick too.. .. I-It's okay isn't it?

Although it's not like she's seeking confirmation from anybody in particular, Ran repeated that thought many, many times.

She can no longer taste the pasta that she thought was more than delicious enough too.

In a half panicked state, Ran mechanically moved her fork.

Uuu, I was treated to lunch too. Somehow, Ichika-san suddenly feels very adult-like.

Talking about being treated before this, she can only remember canned juice and the shooting game at the game center.

Now that you think about it, Ichika-san was really good at games wasn't he?

She remembered about the shooting game where she quickly got a game over when playing it.

She replayed how she was gazing on Ichika's profile under the pretense of watching the game.

She remembered that his figure, when he accurately defeated the enemy, was really cool, just like that of a main character from a movie.

Even so, to think Charlotte-san is this pretty and cute, on top of that she’s also a country’s representative candidate... Something like that is really unfair....

Ran, who was planning to take the entrance examination for IS Academy next year, starting from this summer had hurriedly investigated IS related things.

She knew that about 8 or 9 cases out of ten, nation representative candidates who got into IS Academy, were the users of personal IS. She also knew that they were elite of elites.

On the news they also showed that Houki-san recieved a personal IS. Furthermore, they said that her unit was built by Professor Shinonono herself....

-Uuuu. She thought everyone is really unfair.

Ran thought like that, but she didn't seem to realize yet, that her position as the sister of Ichika's best friend's is a big advantage on its own.

"By the way, Ran."

"Y-Yes!?"

"About that Cannonball Fast ticket which I gave you earlier, it seems to coincide with my birthday. So that means the birthday party that is planned at my house could end pretty late. Is that okay?"

"N-No problem! On that day, that stupid... sorry, I mean my brother will also be there!"

"Ah, now that you mention it. He will be there, won't he."

"Y-Yes..."

Then, she realized a big problem there.

"Ah, will the people from IS Academy also come!?"

"W-What's the matter? Of course they plan to come."

"H-How many people will come?"

"Ummm, five people I think?"

"Five people..."

Ran was attacked by something resembling giddiness. Even just Rin, Houki, and Charlotte are already powerful rivals, but to have even more rivals beside those three made her increasingly anxious.

This is bad, this is bad -. For a birthday present, hand-made cakes and small things won't cut it....

Suddenly, her self-confidence vanished.

Ran had some pride on her moderate cooking skills, but in the first place, Ichika is also a good cook. And to add to that, looking at the price of the watch that Charlotte bought earlier, she became bashful.

But but, I can't ask for advance pocket-money at this time, and my school prohibits part-time work too, uuuuu

Thinking about those things, Ran suddenly remembered about Rin.

W-What will Rin-san do I wonder.... If I remember correctly , Rin-san is also a representative candidate. Then, that means she gets military funding, doesn't she.....

Rin and Ran, the two girls who had seen each other as rivals during Ichika's middle school days. It also could have been because of the competition between Japanese and Chinese style food.

Haaa...There are too many rivals....

Ran became a little disheartened.

Unintentionally, the hand she was using for eating stopped moving, and it worried Ichika.

"What's wrong? Are you already full?"

"N-No, that's, no problem! Yeah."

"Is that so. It's okay then. But if you're full already I'll help finish your food."

"T-Thank you very much."

Even though she said that, she became shy with the mention of giving the food that already touched her lips.

Indirect kiss - thinking that could happen, Ran's face once again reddened.

I wonder, has Ichika-san ever kissed anyone...?

Mindful about those things, Ran became increasingly conscious about her mouth being wiped earlier.

Casually moving her hand, when she tried to gently touch her lips, she strangely felt hot.

How does a kiss feel I wonder...

While she absent-mindedly thought that, their meal was finished, and the time for dessert came.

"Huh? These complementary ice creams, the three of us got different flavors."

"It really is. I wonder why?"

"U-Umm let's see now, mine is strawberry, Ichika-san's is vanilla, and Charlotte-san's is chocolate flavored right? "

"Looks like it."

While looking at the nodding Ichika, a wild idea that crossed Ran's mind started to develop.

T-This, could it be this will become the situation where we feed each other ice cream to taste the different flavors.....

While day-dreaming about Ichika doing a "Okay, Aaaan"[6B 7] scene, Ran let out a slightly flustered smile for an instant.

Shaking off that thought hastily, Ran gazed at the dessert's ice cream again.

"Since it's like this, how about we feed each other?"

"Huh!?"

"Hmm?"

"Wha, no, well, just now, what did you..."

"No, well, maybe we should feed each other or something..."

"!!"

I-Is this a dream?....That's right, if this is a dream then it won't hurt even if I pinch my leg.

Gyuu~~

"Ouch ouch ouch."

"What's wrong!!"

"N-No! Nothing! Nothing at all!"

-It's not a dream!

Ran, whose consciousness was called back to reality by the pain, confirmed that the words that Ichika said earlier were real.

Aah! It's looks like a lie! It's like a dream! To be fed by Ichika-san!

"Then, let's start from my vanilla ice cream. Charl, aaaan."

"A-Aaan."

Charlotte drank the vanilla ice cream. Her face, dyed red just like Ran's, confirmed her as Ran's rival in love.

"T-This is tasty."

"Is that so. I'm glad then. Then, next is Ran."

"Y-Yes."

"Aaan."

"A-Aaan...."

Pakun[6B 8]

Aaah, what should I do. What should I do!? I'm not even tasting it anymore-. Uuu, but, but....this could be happiness.

The dazed Ran didn't realize that there's no longer any ice cream on the spoon and kept holding it in her mouth.

"Ran."

"Hmm?"

"Is there still any ice cream left on the spoon?"

"!? N-No! That's, thank you for the meal."

Ran hastily separated her mouth from the spoon.

Uuu, I did it again

Usually, Student Council President Gotanda Ran would never show this kind of unsightly appearance.

But right now she is only a girl in love that you can find anywhere, who wants to be in front of the person she likes.

◆

Uuun, this girl also likes Ichika, doesn't she.

Seeing their conversational exchange, she confirmed her own thought of "It's just as I had suspected"

Ichika really is a natural ladies-man, isn't he...

Haa, she sighed to herself, then scooped her ice cream.

Fight, Charl!

"I-Ichika, then I'll give you my ice cream next."

"A-Alright."

"Okay, aaaahn...."

"Ahn"

Pakun

"H-How is it? Is it tasty?"

"Nn! This, there's cocoa powder inside. It's really tasty. "

"H-Hee! Is that so."

That tongue, as usual, tasted things in detail, and Charl felt depressed inside by that.

Jeez, Ichika....you don't have to taste it in that detail when I feed you, right? Even if it's a little, I wish he wouldn't feel the texture of the ice cream.[6B 9]

The little Charl inside her head was mad at Ichika.

In any case, the upright Charl didn't forget about Ran.

"Then, Ran-chan too please have some. Aaahn."

"A-Aahn."

Pakun

H-Huh?

"It's really is delicious isn't it."

Ran was smiling. But, inside Charlotte's heart wasn't calm at all.

T-T-This is, indirect kiss with Ichika!? Aaah.....Ran-chan is so lucky...

Charlotte looked at Ran enviously. Unconsciously, she was struck by the urge to lick the spoon too.

N-No no. As expected, that is too unladylike.

Charlotte, who restrained herself using her steel-like will, suddenly realized something and it's like a light bulb in her head lighted up.

T-That's right! Next, is my turn right!? an i-indirect kiss with Ichika....

Charlotte was looking at the spoon in Ran's hand while her heart throbbed. Her eyes were burning, and her cheeks were dyed pink.

"T-Then, Ichika-san! A-Aaahn!"

"Ahn"

Pakun

"Nn! This one has the fruit flesh inside! Delicious."

Thump, thump, thump....

Charlotte's heart was beating fast.

"T-Then, Charlotte-san too. A-Aahn."

"A-Ahn."

Pakun

I-I-I just indirectly kissed Ichika! I really just indirectly kissed Ichika! W-W-What should I do!

Suddenly, she no longer knew about the ice cream's taste.

The good texture from the sherbet-shaped strawberry was conveyed, but even that was only vaguely felt.

"It's tasty."

"Is that so! I'm glad."

Charlotte is gazing at the spoon that left her mouth like she reluctanly had to part with.

But, even thinking that to herself is just too unladylike. She lowered her blushing face.

E-Even so, Ran-chan really is a good kid, isn't she.

Feeding Ichika first to make the indirect kiss happen. Of course, it might be purely her wanting to let Ichika eat first, but Charl took that act as consideration.

T-This is bad. What should I do.... this throbbing won't stop at all.

Her heart seemed to be about to burst from the happiness and delight.

After that, just as expected, she can't feel the taste of her choco ice cream at all.

◆

"T-Thank you for walking me home."

"Yeah. Please say hi to Dan for me."

"O-Okay."

The time was past 4 o'clock. Under the sky where the sun had almost set, Ichika, Charlotte, and Ran were in front of the Gotanda restaurant.

After lunch, the three of them, after visiting all the stores they wanted to, were at the store's front because of

Ichika's words (Then, let's accompany Ran until she reaches her house).

Ran wanted to invite them in for dinner, but since it was only 4 o'clock, she gave up on that idea. As expected, it's still too early for dinner.

"T-Then, that's, see you at the birthday party."

"Yeah. Please cheer us on during the race too."

"Y-Yes! I will certainly do that! G-Good luck in the race !"

While saying that, Ran, who couldn't look at Ichika directly, seemed to be unable to calm down while glancing upwards at her house. Probably, she's trying to not be seen by her family, so she doesn't end up being talked about.

Please don't let that stupid brother come out.....! Also, please also don't let father come out....!

While thinking that, she looked at Ichika once again.

He really is cool isn't he.....

She remembered the first time they met. That day when she fell in love in 0.1 seconds.

- There's no way love at first sight exists. Are you stupid or something.

That day was when she started thinking how unbelievably stupid she was for thinking like that.

Simply, people do fall in love.

The reason can always be added after, and the impression is always vivid.

And also, once it starts, it can no longer be stopped. Unstoppable, an awakening of love.

"I-Ichika-san."

"Hm?"

"Ah.... Erm, that's..."

She entwined the fingertips of her hands behind her back.

Fidgeting, fidgeting. Ran was enveloped by a stifling feeling of wanting to say something, but being unable to do so, and ended up saying "Good night!"

Uuuu, stupid me! Stupid stupid!

She entered her house, and while climbing the stairs with quick steps, she started berating herself in her mind.

"Oh? Is that you Ran? So, you're home already."

While going to the second floor, she ran into Dan.

And in his hand was a certain high grade cup ice cream that she had preciously saved.

"This stupid brother!"

Finding an outlet to release her frustration, Ran settled it with a dropkick.

◆

Alone with I-Ichika on the road home.... Alone.....alone.....

Charlotte and Ichika were on their way home, but somehow a strange silence stretched between them.

The main reason was Charlotte's temper, but Ichika being Ichika, was concerned about Charlotte and ended up not talking either.

"Today was fun wasn't it."

"Huh!? Ah, yeah! It was fun!"

To Charlotte, who wanted to make use of this chance, her head had been filled with impatience and confusion from the moment they arrived at the bus stop in front of the academy. Those little Charlottes inside her brain had been making a fuss in a meeting.

Aaa, we've arrived in front of the gate. This is bad, this is really bad, the chances of meeting someone are large since *we've arrived at the school site, isn't it. N-Need some kind of topic.... topic...*

"B-By the way Ichika."

"Hmm?"

"Do you like listening to music?"

"Aa, my friend used to lend his music to me during middle school, but I haven't been buying any new music lately. And you see, we're also busy with IS related things right?"

"I-Is that so. Now that you mention it, speaking of IS!"

"Yeah."

"The new equipment that they sent from my home country last time is quite nice isn't it! Like the rapid-fire speed, or the number of bullets loaded."

"Hee. Is that so. Charl's shooting ability is getting even stronger then."

"T-That's right isn't it! Aha, ahahahahah......"

Aaaaah, I'm so stupid stupid stupid! That topic was completely something a girl would not talk about! Think about a better topic to talk about, my brain!

If Ichika had not been around, she would have hit her own head.

"Ah, it's Houki."

-It's over.

Charlotte hung her head inside her heart.

"Heeeyy, Houkiii."

Sure enough, Ichika called out to Houki.

And then, Houki, also noticing being called so suddenly, went to their side.

"Ichika and Charlotte. Did you go somewhere outside the school?"

"Aa, we were shopping. Right?"

"Y-Yeah."

"W, just the two of you!?"

"No, Ran was also there. We met her by chance on the way. Right?"

"Y-Yeah."

Houki frowned toward Charlotte, who had been giving answers as if she was somehow feeling guilty.

"W-Well, if wasn't just the two of you, then it's okay."

Houki cleared her throat, and then crossed her arm.

"Even so, since you went shopping, why didn't you invite me too? Since I also need to buy daily necessities and some other things too."

"Alright. I understand. Next time I'll mail you when I want to go shopping."

"U, umu. That's good then."

Houki nodded. Her cheeks got little red.

"Now then, since we have returned just before dinner too, how about we have dinner together?"

"Y-Yeah!"

"N-Now that you mention it. Since you've asked about it, I guess I'll join you."

"Then, let's return to our own rooms first and then gather at the cafeteria entrance. How about in 10 minutes ?"

"Ah, can I also invite Laura if she's in our room?"

"Alright. The more the merrier right? I'll invite Rin too. "

"W-Why do you mention Rin's name suddenly!?"

"Well, actually today Rin had also planned to tag along . She said she had an emergency then, but it should be over by now I think."

"....That Rin, how cunning...."

"Hmm?"

"N-No, nothing at all!"

Hastily clearing her throat, Houki tried to change the topic.

"Then, see you later."

"Yeah!"

"Aa!"

The vigorously answering Houki and Charlotte nodded in a smile.

Chapter 3: Cannonball Fast

Monday, after school. I'm on the side of the tennis court in a gloomy mood.

The reason for this was that it has been put into motion, the **Student Council Executive Orimura Ichika Lending Campaign**.

"Haaaa..."

A bingo tournament was held in which all clubs participated. The one who managed to acquire the no. 1 spot was the tennis club.

And the reason for my gloomy mood was the **Tournament to Acquire The Right For Orimura Ichika's Massage** that's being held on the court at both sides.

"Haaaa!"

"I won't lose!"

"That massage that Cecilia boasted so much about, I will certainly win it!"

...Cecilia, what have you done?

Or rather, for that to be the main reason they're so fired up, is a little troubling.

"I'm going!"

"....Guh! W-What a heavy ball!"

"What an easy return!"

"Aah!"

Cecilia is showing her unreasonable stubbornness isn't she....

Well, it's better than being depressed I guess. Seems that lately, she had been training individually at the arena until closing time. If a massage can take away her fatigue, then I guess it's a small price to pay.

After that, Cecilia smoothly advanced to the finals, where she clinched the win with a splendid straight.

As for me, I was distributing towels and sport drinks to the girls in the order that they were eliminated.

"Cecilia, good work. You won splendidly, didn't you?"

"Ha, ha, ha.... It's only.... natural.... Ha....."

"Here's, a towel and also an energy drink."

"Uhmmm...ah, Ichika-san? Right now, my arms feel like lead pipes.....ha, ha,.....that is, if you, could you wipe my face for me...."

"Alright. Got it."

Certainly, being the winner means she had to play more matches, so it's no wonder she's become so tired.

I did as I'm asked to and proceeded to wipe the sweat off her face.

While doing that, the surrounding people screamed out all at once.

"Aaaaaaa!"

"Cecilia, what are you doing?!"

"You've already won the tournament, that's not fair! Not fair!"

A chorus of booing emerged from all the other tennis club members present at once.

This is Cecilia we are talking about, so of course she took all the complaints head on and even pridefully flicked her hair back.

"It's not unfair! This is just the privilege of the winner!"

With the same pose as usual, she put her hand at her hip while somehow emitting a seemingly dazzling aura.[6C 1]

"Gununu...!"

"So mortifying! Losing to that princess-like behavior is so mortifying!"

"Orimura-kun! If it's like this, then you must give that service to everyone else too!"

"Wh!?"

Why did my name come up at this point!?

"That's right.... How about, wiping everyone's back while we're changing?"

"Ahh! That sounds good! Really good!"

"I'm also drenched with sweat, please do so."

"""It's okay isn't it, Orimura-kun?"""

Being surrounded in just an instant, I'm troubled with how to deal with the nearing crowd.

"T-There's no way it will be okay! In the first place, if we're talking about when you change then....underwear... "

I unintentionally imagined about that scene.

The girls of the tennis club in their underwear. In the midst of this, I'm walking around wiping their backs. Not good, I can't do it! I definitely can't do it!

"T-That kind of service is not included!"

"""Eeeeehhhhh!?!"""

A bigger booing than the one Cecilia received occurred
.

"It's okay, isn't it?!"

"We're wearing sports bras[6C 2], so it's not embarrassing!"

To all the girls who still insisted on refusing to back down, I shouted while making an X mark with my arms.

"No way! Definitely no!"

And then another booing echoed on the after school's tennis court.

◆

Aah, to be able to receive that massage again.... what bliss.

Cecilia thoroughly soaped her body, and then washed the foam while humming.

Once, right after club activities, and now once more in her own room, she showered.

The shiatsu[6C 3] *hurts a little bit, but the lymphatic massage*[6C 4] *after that feels unbearably good*

Remembering the feeling of relaxation by the whole palm, Cecilia narrowed her eyes in a trance.

"~~♪~~♪"

She hummed a famous classical song, Vivaldi's **Four Season**. Just as expected from someone who performed on the piano[6C 5] and violin[6C 6], even while humming, from the rhythm [6C 7] to the tempo[6C 8], there's no disorder at all.

Cecilia's voice is also lovely in itself, which makes the sounds echoing in the shower room seem musical.

After this, since I've wiped my body thoroughly, I'll use rose perfume.

Truth to be told, Cecilia would actually like to soak in a bathtub with rose petals floating in it, but in the end she gave up on the idea.

But, she wanted to appeal with all her might to the boy she lost her heart to.

W-What about the underwear?...

Cecilia hesitated on whether to wear the sexy lingerie she bought when she went back to her home country or not.

But, what crossed her mind was her maid and childhood friend Chelsea, and her words:

"Ojou-sama[6C 9], I think underwear that's too gaudy might have the opposite effect."

....

I wonder if that would be the case...... But, Chelsea doesn't have a boyfriend, does she?

Somehow, she felt that the precocious smile that was drawn on her face, brought some kind of confidence, and she became even more troubled.

H-How about not wearing any underwear?...

It was quite a bold idea, but when she thought about it , she started to think it might not be such a bad one.

T-That's right. It's only because it will become a hindrance during the massage.... Of course I will wear something for the lower part!

While thinking of that, Cecilia got out of the bathroom.

At the dressing room, she tried to put only low-rise shorts and a high-class silk shirt on her body.

T-This is... as expected, this is too bold isn't it?...

Cecilia, who suddenly felt embarrassed, quickly covered her slightly exposed cleavage.

At that moment, the feeling she felt when her hand touched her breast increased her shame even more.

"A-As I thought, I mustn't go without wearing clothes befitting a lady...."

After that, Cecilia spent around 30 more minutes choosing her outfit.

And then, standing in front of her dearest wish, Ichika's room, she cleared her throat once and then reservedly knocked on the door.

"Alright. Cecilia, I've been waiting for you."

"Y-Yeah... Sorry for making you wait."

In the end, Cecilia decided to wear a safe pajama. That thing that's made from silk is overflowing with a pretty lustrous impression.

I've also held back on the underwear too..... It should be okay right?

Although, compared to what a high-schooler would usually wear, it was thrice more expensive, but that's what it means to be born into a higher social class.

"Then, let's start at once."

"What!? T-that's, uhmmm... I would like to drink some tea first, so as to relax, if you are okay with that..."

"I-Is that so? Sorry."

Ichika offered his bed for Cecilia to sit on, and then headed to the simple kitchen.

"I only have a red tea teabag, please bear with it."

"Y-Yeah, well, I'll let you off this time."

"Thank you."

-*Doki*

Even from just a casual exchange, Cecilia's heart pounded.

Now, only for now, to be able to monopolize the person she loved stirred her heart's beat.

L-Lately, Ichika-san's training has been showing its effect, t-that's.....he looks.....cool

He's also becoming better at controlling IS, and lately he's also able to do well on the energy pace distribution. Cecilia gazed at Ichika who has been conspicuously growing with a complicated feeling.

I'm happy that Ichika is getting stronger, but my position is. ...

She's sad about becoming less dependable lately.

When she was asked to help with Ichika's high-maneuver combat training, she refused because she was depressed at the moment, but she might answer with a "I'll take that request after all" if she was asked again now.

While thinking about that, Ichika brought the red tea.

"Here."

"T-Thank you. Itadakimasu wa."

The tea that's been made to be a little lukewarm was extremely easy to drink, and the tea fragrance spread out inside the mouth.

A hot one would have been hard to drink, so-. That nonchalant consideration made Cecilia's heart beat even harder.

"........."

".........."

As the two of them were drinking the red tea in silence , 10 minutes had already passed.

T-This isn't good. This is not good at all.....! Ichika-san will think I'm a boring girl who doesn't have any topic to talk about at all!

Truth to be told, it was just because Ichika was also lost in his own thoughts, but Cecilia, who would not permit such a silence to stretch in front of her, started to search for a talking subject with all her might.

"By the way Ichika-san, how's it going at the Student Council?"

"Hmm? Yeah. I had been helping with paperwork until yesterday, but as of today, the club rental has started so... Truth to be told, it's hard."

"Don't you think that just being wanted is enough to get happy?"

"Is that so? In the first place, could my presence make the members happy?"

"O-Of course! At least, it does for me!"

Unintentionally, Cecilia over-reacted and even leaned her body forward.

"A-Alright. I got it. Calm down."

"O-Okay...."

By the time she was calmed by Ichika and returned to the bed, there was no more red tea left inside the cup.

"Hmm? So, has Cecilia also finished her tea? Then, let's start the massage."

"O-Okay...!"

While feeling embarrassed from saying that last word in a squeaking pitch[6C 10], Cecilia timidly rested face down on the bed.

"U-Umm hey, Ichika-san?"

"Hmm?"

"T-That's....."

-S-Should I say it? But but, what if he thinks I'm strange.....? Aaah, mou, Just say it with spirit, me!

"S-Should I undress the lower part too...?"

"Wha!?"

"N-No, it's just so it will be easier to massage.....!"

"I-It's alright. It's alright so please stop it, Cecilia. Please don't say things like Tatenashi-san would."

-Mu. That person said those kind of things? Unforgivable. T-That's not it, the reason I can't forgive her is just... that it is very unlady like!

"Cecilia."

"W-What is it!?"

"No, well, please relax a little. Your body is stiffening up, you know."

"I... I understand."

Taking a deep breath, she released the strength within her body.

Calm down, she thought to herself. Realizing her body was about to be touched by Ichika again made her heart ring.

"Then, I'll start from the feet."

"Y-Yeah."

While her heart throbbed at the moment, Ichika's hand touched Cecilia's leg.

-*Dokin!*

Along with the slowly starting massage, the silk of the pajama between the two skins made a *zara-zara* sound.

Cecilia was at her limit, just controlling the beat in her chest. She was at the stage where she couldn't feel the sensation of the massage at all.

A.... But, it feels good....

That massage which uses all parts of the palm, comfortably released all the fatigue stored in her legs.

Furthermore, to have the person in your heart doing it, made it even more enjoyable.

Cecilia, while being soaked by an unspeakable pleasant feeling, let out a feverish sigh.

"Haa.... Ichika-san, you're really good at this, aren't you..."

"Yeah. Thank you for the compliment."

Finished with the calf, Ichika started to touch her thigh .

Cecilia's heart skipped a beat for an instant, and then, as calmly as she could, she spun some dressed-up words[6C 11].

"H-How is it? My body."

"Hmm? Aah, just as I had expected, your legs really are long and slender aren't they? Did Cecilia use to work as a model?"

"It's because I'm a representative candidate student, so I've done something like that a few times. Especially lately, since there's an approach of pushing representative candidate students as idols."

"Is that sooo, so it's just like I thought. Next time, how about showing me one of your pictures."

"O-Okay. I'll bring it next time."

While saying it as it didn't matter, Cecilia started to desperately think about which picture would be a good one to show.

There's one where I was wearing a dress, but maybe I should show him the plain clothes one..... there's also the one with the s-swimsuit....

Had she known something like this would happen, she would have done something better during the photo-shooting, is what she regretfully was thinking now .

During this summer's photography session in her hometown, she was unmotivated enough to not remember which clothes she wore during the session. ...... In other words, a complete failure.

Ichika-san too, wanting to see the model picture at this time. ..... that's unfair.

Cecilia inflated her cheeks a little.

But, that sulking face couldn't hold for even 2 minutes, because of the pleasant feeling of the massage.

Aah, this feels good....

From the back of the knee, to carefully loosen the thigh , Cecilia let out a sigh in a trance.

And then, having finished with the thigh joint and finally reaching the bottom, Ichika's hand stopped temporarily.

"Aa-...that's, can I skip to the hip next?"

"N-No you can't. Please, do it thoroughly, that's......the b-bottom too....."

"O-Okay."

Ichika nodded as if to steel his resolve, and then he took a deep breath.

As expected, even Ichika-san too, I-is a little conscious about it isn't he......?

Of Cecilia being a woman. As one of the opposite sex.

B-But as expected, it is embarrassing, isn't it? To be touched on the b-bottom....

"T-Then, Cecilia. I'll do it, okay?"

"O-Okay. Whenever you're ready."

Dokin! The noticeably big leap of her heart hurts.

Cecilia silently gulped to clear her mouth of saliva, as if to not let it be seen, and waited for Ichika to touch her bottom.

Since I've done tightening stretches for 30 minutes each day , it'll be fine...it's fine

Thump *thump* *thump* *thump*

-Munyu[6C 12]

".....!?"

Ichika's fingers were eaten by a soft bulge.

Although she was being massaged, Cecilia was strongly conscious about Ichika's hand touching her bottom, her face reddening as if it was being boiled.

"I-Is it firm?"

"T-That's, right, it feels a little, firm...... I-Is it because of that? Because Cecilia is playing the piano?"

"Y-Yeah. When I play the piano, I concentrate my senses fully, and....when I practice, there're some occasions in which I sit for a long time too...."

"I-Is that so....."

"Y-Yes...."

Both Cecilia and Ichika were in a "what should I do" condition, and they continued the fumbling conversation.

By the way, inside Ichika's head.....

Uwaaa, so soft! This wouldn't lose, not even to Tatenashi-san's.....not good, not good!

....Something like that is going on.

Wanting to move quickly to the hip, Ichika's massaging hand moved faster.

But, by doing that, the soft elasticity was felt to the utmost of his palm, causing Ichika's face to redden on top of Cecilia.

"T-Then, the hip....."

"Y-Yeah."

Since it has come to this, she would have liked to be touched a little more, is what Cecilia thought, but for her own shame that had almost reached the limit, she obediently consented to Ichika's suggestion.

J-Just as expected, anything more than this is.... That's, if we're not officially dating first......

"Please tell me if it's unpleasant or painful."

"O-Okay."

When her backbone was getting shiatsu-ed, there was a little suffocating feeling, but overlapping with that, she was engulfed in a pleasantness as if her body had become lighter.

Unlike when he was massaging the bottom, he took the time to do each bone one by one, and that made Cecilia once again let out a pink sigh.

Aaah.... It feels good.... It's as if today's fatigue is getting blown away

5 minutes, 10 minutes of supreme bliss continued.

And then, when Ichika's hand reached the neck joint, he suddenly called out to her.

"Cecilia."

"Hya...!?"[6C 13]

The voice that reached almost directly into her ears, and the breath from it, slightly brushing against her, made her body jump in surprise.

"Your hair sure is pretty, isn't it. And furthermore, it smells nice too."

"U-Umm you know, that's, because I use a good shampoo so.....Hya!?"

Ichika took Cecilia's hair into his hand and started playing with it.

With his fingers touching her nape, Cecilia's heart got bewildered.

I-Ichika-san....? Suddenly, why are - huh!? F-Finally, you've become aware of my charm!?

Really, you're so slow - unable to finish that kind of thought, the suddenly fast approach made Cecilia's heart throb violently enough to hurt.

Before she realized what was happening, Ichika had put his body on top of hers, as if to cover her. She could feel everything, even the body temperature.

"Cecilia..."

"Yes...."

"Your body, can I touch it directly?"

"B-By all means...."

Cecilia timidly replied. Almost as if answering, Ichika's hand immediately entered through the pajama's opening.

Kyaa!?

While being surprised from the recent events, Cecilia remembered something which had imprinted on her a very similar feeling.

I-Ichika-san.... Aah, it's just like a dream....

"It's not a dream."

Aaah, it's real isn't it!

......?

That exchange just now, doesn't it seem weird?

"It's not weird at all."

Look, again! Even though I didn't let out my voice.

Cecilia, who had remembered the out of place feeling, sprang out of bed.

And then, what was there was -

"Ojou-sama, even though I had instructed you to hold back on the underwear so much."

"Ch-Chelsea!?"

The person who's supposed to be in England, her personal maid and childhood friend Chelsea.

"T-T-This is..."

"Yes, it's a dream."

Bang! The sound of an exploding balloon echoed. Inside the world that suddenly turned completely white in an instant, only Chelsea's smile could be vividly seen.

◆

"Uel.... That was a cruel....., such a cruel punchline!"

Cecilia sprang out of bed.

She was on top of a bed in a completely dark room. The clock's needle was pointing at 2 A.M.

"T-This place is...?"

Bewildered by the differences from her usual bed's comfort, Cecilia's eyes wandered from left to right.

Consequently, she discovered a person sleeping in the bed right beside her.

"I-Ichika-san...?"

That means, the part until the massage was real, but the problem is - .

W-Which parts were a dream....?

Something like that.

Winning the Tennis club tournament, receiving the massage as a reward, and then falling asleep midway through the massage from the excessive pleasantness, and right now she is currently in Ichika's room.

"...Fu."

Feeling somewhat mentally fatigued, Cecilia sank her body back into the bed.

Beside her, Ichika, who was oblivious to Cecilia's current circumstances, breathed silently while sleeping.

Really....what a terrible failure.....

While thinking that aloud, Cecilia let out a laugh as if she had enjoyed it in some way.

Then, with a somewhat affectionate look on her face, she fixed her gaze on Ichika.

Someday....I'll make you fall to my charms.

She made a gun with her fingers, and then fixed her sight on her target.

"Bang."

Cecilia said with a mischievous smile.

◆

"Whaaaat!?"

Morning, screaming voices were echoing inside the school cafeteria. ....H-Hey, shhhh! Shhhh!

"C-Charl! Rin! Lower your voices!"

"B-B-But!"

"Ichikaa! Explain yourself!"

With eyes wet with tears and eyebrows raised, Charl and Rin drew closer to me again.

""Why did Cecilia come out from your room wearing pajamas!?""

Somehow, I feel like an absurd misunderstanding had been born.

"Even if you ask why, it's just like what it looks like."

Cecilia smoothly slid her hair to the side in a haughty manner.

Cecilia! Why are you pouring oil on the fire!?"

Disregarding the nervous me, Cecilia smoothly continued her words.

"A girl and a boy spent a night together. In other words, it was that kind of thing."

"N-Nooo!"

"Ichikaaa!"

"Gyaa! Wait wait! Yesterday, I gave Cecilia a massage! She was staying in my room only because she fell asleep midway!"

I carefully conveyed the truth word by word.

Having done that, Charl and Rin let out a sigh as if they had been relieved, and then returned to their seats.

"So it's only that..."

"Well, I thought it was something like that in the first place anyway."

Saying that, the two of them then returned to eating their meal.

By the way, for the menu, Charl picked cream stew, while Rin chose Gome Yakisoba[6C 14].

"...Even though there was no need to tell the truth too. Stupid Ichika-san...."

"Hmm? What is it, Cecilia?"

I missed hearing what Cecilia, who ate a BLT Bagel, seemed to have said in a small voice.

When I tried to verify it, she turned her face the other way sulkily.

"Nothing."

? Why are you in a bad mood so suddenly? I really don't understand.

....But, I'm glad Houki and Laura weren't here. Had this talk been heard by the two of them, I wonder what they would've said.

".........."

".........."

U? Huh? Somehow I feel an intense glare (x2) directed at me.

Timidly turning my face around, what I saw were the figures of Laura & Houki, folding their arm and standing like Niou

"Ichika...you bastard, so you broke the dorm rule didn't you."

"R-Rule?"

"Special rule number 1! There must be no girl staying in a boy's room!"

"C-Calm down, Laura!"

"Eei, shut up! If you plan to be like that, fine then! I'm staying at your room today!"

"Whaa!?"

"Wait, why has it gotten like this. If it gets like this, well.... then I'll apply for candidacy too."

"It's only to keep the balance!" is what Houki added.

Why has it become like this....

"Huuh! That's not fair! Then me too!"

"Ichika! Prioritize me! I'm your childhood friend right!"

Gya! Charl and Rin are joining too. Why, what happened!?

"What are you making such an stupid fuss about this early morning!"

Bishi! I seemed to hear a voice that could freeze the air.

Tapping her fingers on top of her folded arms is my real sister, who fits extremely well with the jet-black suit, Orimura Chifuyu-sensei.

"These stupid kids!"

Supapan! Chifuyu-nee hit the head of us five. Incidentally, she especially used her fist for me. ....Wa, it really hurts.

"Alcott."

"Y-Yes!?"

"Don't forget to submit the reflection essay."

"O-Okay..."

"And Orimura"

"Y-Yes?"

"I'll let you have the disciplinary room for three days. Be happy."

"T-Thank you very much....."

Wh, isn't that too harsh? This really is my sister!

"Now! How long are you going to eat slowly like that! Quickly, eat your breakfast and go to the classroom! That's all!"

Pan! *Pan!* With Chifuyu's clapping sign, the girls in the cafeteria that had been preparing to flee started to move in haste.

I also started to slurp my miso soup from the grilled salmon set meal.

It seems like the saltiness has slightly thickened.

Is this what they call the taste of tears I wonder.

It could be that, from having that stupid thought found out, I got hit once again.

◆

"Okay, everyone. Today we're going to have a lesson concerning high-speed maneuvering."

The assistant homeroom teacher, Yamada Maya-sensei's voice echoed at arena no.6.

"I said last week that this arena no. 6 is connected to the central tower so we can do a self-study on high-speed maneuvering, didn't I? Well then, let's have the personal-IS users perform first!"

After saying that, Yamada-sensei flashily directed her hand at me and Cecilia.

"First, equipping the high-speed maneuver package [Strike Gunner] is Alcott-san!"

The 4 firing bits that are usually equipped on the side binder, and also the missile bits connected to the hip part , so as to simultaneously use the propulsion power from these bits, totaling 6 units, seemed to be the package's special feature.

It achieved the high-speed & high-mobilization, by sealing every cannon mouth from each bit, and connecting them to the hip parts.

At a glance, the bits looked like a blue skirt.

"And then, using normal equipment, but managed to create a virtual high-speed maneuver equipment by adjusting the thruster maximum output, Orimura-kun! Let's have these two perform one lap for us!"

Good luck! Those kind of cheering was heard all around us. Cecilia and I lightly raised our hands to answer the cheering, and then returned to concentrating our senses on our ISs.

Umm let's see, what should I do with this auxiliary visor for high-speed maneuver?

[Ichika-san, is there anything you don't understand?]

Immediately, in the private channel, Cecilia gave a timely help.

"Right on time. This visor, I have to change the mode to use it, right? How do I do that?"

[Ah, you have to change the mode to high-speed. And also, do a synchronized surveillance set-up on each thruster.]

[Got it. Like this right?]

Changing the mode using Eye Touch (Look Designation), for an instant, a light membrane spread out and covered my whole vision field. After that, the scenery that I've been seeing until now became more clearly projected into my eyes.

[You can get dizzy if you're not used to it. Be careful.]

"Yeah, Thank you."

[N-No. It's nothing... A-After all, I'm Cecilia Alcott.]

While listening to Cecilia's words, who seemed to have gotten embarrassed, I also pointed my unit towards the sky.

"Then, ...3, 2, 1, Go!"

Along with Yamada-sensei's flag signal, Cecilia and I soared to the sky at once, and then increased our speed to break past the speed of sound.

The flowing scenery should have only been seen for an instant, but thanks to the auxiliary visor, everything can be seen clearly.

E-Even so, this really is amazing....!

Even now, I still get surprised by the speed of the IS, but this speed already matches the speed of a regular Ignition Boost (Instant Acceleration).

[See you later♪]

Only glancing at me, who's still perplexed at the speed , without even turning her head, Cecilia moved ahead. And then she immediately ascended, moving along the outer circumference of the central tower where the academy's monument resided.

As expected of someone who is used to this. Yosh, me too.

To compensate for the difference from the usual circumstances, I control the suit with even more prudence than usual.

We're currently on ultrasonic state, so if we hit something, it won't end with just some pain. There's also the possibility that the tower itself will be destroyed from the shock wave.

In any case, while being careful with the speed and the suit's inclination, I chased after Cecilia.

"Alright! I caught you."

[Hmm? I thought you were captivated by my charming hip.]

"S-Stupid."

[Just joking. Ufufu♪]

Exchanging that kind of conversation with Cecilia, who was in a good mood for some unknown reason, we turned back from the top of the tower.

And just like that, we returned to the arena's surface side by side.

"Okay. Good work! You two were really excellent."

Yamada-sensei praised me and Cecilia with a happy face.

I wonder if having your student doing an excellent job can make you very happy, because Yamada-sensei was jumping up and down from it which made her voluptuous bust bounce along with her.

Uuu, just as usual, she's really a person who makes it hard to find a place to direct your gaze at.

"Hey, Ichika, hey!"

"W-What is it, Laura?"

"You also, that's....well..... Do you like a bigger chest better?"

"Wh!? No, you're wrong! I-It's not like I've done something to feel guilty about you know!?"

"Fu, fun! Is that so. .....It's good then, if it's like that....."

"Y-Yeah?"

"N-Nothing! -Eeei, don't look this way!"

I was mowed down by the hand of Laura in her deployed IS form. Having done that, the mentioned AIC(Inertia Blocking Barrier) was put into work, and my neck got locked in a weird angle.

Y-You were the one who talked to me first, weren't you!

During this time, Chifuyu-nee clapped her hands and everyone turned their attention to her.

"Listen here. We have an exception this year so the first years will participate, but more than just doing it, I hope for each individual here to leave some results too. The experience you'll get in this Cannonball Fast will surely live on. Well then, the training IS users, go and start choosing your suit, and immediately board your assigned unit. Do it fast. Start!"

This regular yearly event, Cannonball Fast, was originally an event for the second years who had already arrived at the preparation chapter of the curriculum. But this year, since there are unexpected circumstances, such as the large number of personal IS users, students starting from first year will also be participating.

The training unit group seemed to use the usual prize in order to make the whole class completely get into the rivalry battle.

"Alriight, let's win this~"

"I have to show my good points to onee-sama here!"

"Win and get a free dessert coupon! I have to get serious here!"

Could it be that from being swamped by all these spirited girls, all of the teachers were also coaching earnestly.

Especially Yamada-sensei, who had really gotten her spirit into it. Today she used the usual IS suit which is a little revealing in the chest area.

The person herself probably opened it only because the chest compartment doesn't fit her.

It's too stimulating for a 15 year old.

-while thinking that kind of absurd thing, the girl in question, Yamada-sensei herself approached me.

"Orimura-kun, the performance back then was really magnificent. Especially for someone who uses that visor for the first time, to be able to pilot the unit like that was really amazing."

"T-Thank you very much!"

Since my IS is in the deployed form at the moment, my line of sight is higher than usual.

If I wanted to look at her face, her chest would inevitably be seen too, so I let my gaze roam around while scratching my hot cheek with my finger.

"Orimura-kun? Ah...."

Up until now, it seems that unless she is warned, Yamada-sensei can't see anything else around her when she's excited about something.

Yamada-sensei, who has just realized about my gaze, folded her arms as if to hide her chest, and also turned her body to the side.

"U-Umm, maybe It would be better to buy a new IS suit?"

"Really?"

"B-But, Orimura-kun can't concentrate during the lesson..."

"Ha, haa...."

"B-But, in that case it would have to be a specially ordered one, wouldn't it.... I had just semi-ordered the one I use now to be made too, so, it seems like a waste to change it so soon..."

Yamada-sensei was murmuring as if she's swallowing her own words. That embarrassed face is strangely charming.

While she was troubled by what she should do, Chifuyu-nee turned up.

"Orimura."

"Y-Yes."

Dosu! My neck was chopped. It really hurts.

"To look at your teacher like that is impudent, you know."

"T-That's not..."

"If your unit doesn't use any additional thrusters, discuss with Shinonono-san there about tuning the energy distribution. Got it?"

"O-Okay..."

A consideration from my kind older sister. .....I'm moved to tears.

I moved to Houki's place just like I was told. Since my IS is deployed at the moment, I don't have to walk using my feet. It's really comfortable.

"Heeyy, Houki."

"......"

Talking about Houki, could it be that because the energy distribution is quite hard, she's been staring at the holographic projection screen?

I raised the volume of my voice, and called her once again.

"Heey, Houki. Heey"

"!? W-What!?"

"Well, I'm also in the no additional equipment group, so Orimura-sensei told me to exchange opinions with you."

"I-Is that so! Then, Ichika, sorry for rushing you so suddenly, but look at [Akatsubaki]'s energy distribution! "

Houki, whose face brightened up because she felt that she has been saved with my arrival, moved to my side and showed me the display.

It seems like when the [Fold-Out Armor] is turned on, the energy is not enough.

"[Byakushiki] has the big thruster for speed, but [Akatsubaki]'s all-roundness sure is amazing isn't it. Since it can achieve high-speed maneuver by just releasing the fold-out armor in the back and leg parts."

"But, it's meaningless if there not enough energy to use it. Really, that person's creations are always like this..."

Whenever the topic of the conversation becomes Tabane-san, Houki always frowns. At such times, I can't help thinking about how sisters should be nice to each other.

"What about [Kenran Butou]?"

"T-That one....I still can't use it."

"Is that so. This is just from an amateur perspective, but I feel like somehow, [Akatsubaki] was created with the basis of using [Kenran Butou] as the energy supply."

Houki's IS, [Akatsubaki]'s one off ability, [Kenran Butou], has the ability to refill and multiply energy.

Thereby, matching it with the situation when releasing the high-energy consuming fold-out armor to supply it - or something like that I guess.

[Akatsubaki]'s fold-out armor seems to use [multiple energy]. Like the BT weapon, it's capability when diverted to offensive and defensive, and even mobility role is first class.

But, if they're not steadly supplied by using [Kenran Butou], the unit would immediately run out of energy. .... How do I say this, it seems very similar to [Byakushiki].

"Then, how about deactivating the leg part and only activating the back part? For balance control, use the unit's common thruster."

"Well, I also thought about it, but the fold-out armor's output will become too weak. I also thought about completely deactivating the fold-out armor altogether but -"

"You won't be able to win the race right?"

"That's right.... Ununu."

It's the hate-to-lose Houki we're talking about, since she's already participating, it's just normal for her to seek victory, isn't it?

And neither do I like losing, just like her. That's why I completely understand her feelings right now.

"Ichika, how do you plan to adjust your unit for the race?"

"Me? I plan to seal [Yukihira Niigata] and redirect the energy completely to the thrusters."

"Completely? What will you do if you get attacked?"

"Avoid it."

"What about when you want to initiate an attack?"

"I'll ram them."

It was the final conclusion after a long consideration, but Houki bursted out laughing from my answer.

"Hahaha. You're just like an inoshishi-musha[6C 15] aren't you."

"Gu.... Even though I've thought about this earnestly."

"Fufu. It's very like you so it's okay isn't it. .....I'm going to think longer about this alone. Thanks for the help, Ichika."

"Yeah, you're welcome. I won't lose to you on the match day."

"It's the same for me."

"Then, see you later."

"Aa."

Parting with Houki, this time I headed into the thruster-expansion group where Charlotte and Laura reside.

By the way, once sorted, it becomes like this.

High-speed maneuver group : Cecilia, Rin.
Adjusting the unit's output group : Houki, me.
Thruster-expansion group : Charlotte, Laura.

Now that I think about it, that Rin, she seems brimming with confidence.

[That package is made better than I had expected. Just wait for it, I'll beat you completely at the race!]

I remembered Rin's figure when she folded her arms and arrogantly announced that.

As I thought, the package is nice. I wish I could get it, even if only once.

But after all, my dear unit, [Byakushiki], seems to have quite the spoiled personality. Even its former development place, Kuramoto research institute, has already given up on developing any expansion equipment for it. It's a lost cause already.

If I really want to get an equipment expansion, it seems there's no way other than asking Tabane-san for it.

.....But, I wonder where that person is right now?

After the incident with the Gospel during the summer, Tabane-san whereabouts are still unkown. As usual, it made quite a commotion in the world though. Haah...

"Ah, Ichika♪"

Charl, who discovered my presence, waved her hand.

While raising my hand lightly in response, I arrived at the two close friends, Laura and Charlotte's group and returned my IS into standby mode.

"How are you two doing?"

"We've just finished installing the thruster-expansions. We're going to start adjusting it now, right?"

"Aa, that's right."

Indeed, now that they mention it, both of them are still wearing their IS suit while only deploying the head part of their IS.

Charl's headband-like gear, and Laura's rabbit-ear like head parts, both of those look like some kind of cosplay[6C 16] gear and they somehow look a little cute wearing those.[6C 17]

It seems like because it's in the middle of reading the installed data, both of their headgears wiggled once in a while. That makes them looks even more like animals, somehow making my heart feel ticklish.

"Could you show me a little too?"

"Yeah, of course. I'll do a lap with Laura. I'll forward the images to you. It's on channel 304."

"Ooh, thanks. Just as expected, to be able to see the point of view of a first-rate pilot is really nice isn't it. This really is an useful function."

That function called [Direct View], is the sharing of the field of vision information - in other words, I can see the world that Charl see through my IS. It's like a television, or rather a live image stream.

"I'll show you the view from my point of view too. It's on channel 305."

"Ooo, thank you. But, Laura's field-of-vision-movement-level is too high so it's hard just to follow."

"You idiot. Devote yourself in learning to keep up."

"I know. Please let me learn from you, Laura-sensei."

"Fu, fun. Who is a Sensei[6C 18]?"

Even while saying that, Laura's cheek was dyed red as if she wasn't that unhappy with that title.

It seems she was just shy about it.

Now then, connect to the channel and..

"Ichika, are you prepared?"

"Aa, perfectly. .....huh, to be able to see your own face on live broadcast sure feels strange isn't it."

"Huh!? No, well, it's not like I keep looking at Ichika's face all the ti...."

"Hmm?"

"I-It's nothing."

Gazing strangely at Charl, who was waving her hand repeatedly, Laura deployed her IS, [Schwarzer Regen], first and started to float.

"I'll go first."

"Ah, wait for me! Lauraaa!"

Although late by one step, Charl also deployed her IS, [Raphael Revive Custom II].

Both of them safely controlled their units to run through the arena no.6 course, and then ascended to the central tower's outer circumference.

I see.... So that's how you accelerate.

Charl and Laura, I grasped their piloting method while looking at each of their terminal screens.

They have different methods of acceleration, but the similarity in their brake timing becomes a very good reference for me.

"Ichika, how is it?"

Laura and Charl returned a few moments later.

"Yeah, welcome back. As expected, you're good aren't you? Both Charl and Laura?"

"Just this much is basic stuff. I didn't do anything special."

"Just as expected of the representative candidate students. I've learned a lot."

"Yup. You should dedicate yourself to learning."

After briefly visiting each personal IS users (Rin is in class 2 so she's not here), I started to tune my unit again.

"Orimura-kun, how was it?"

"Ah, Yamada-sensei. Well, Just as expected, everyone's really amazing aren't they?"

"Orimura-kun should do his best too. Cannonball Fast is a battle race where you can obstruct the other participant, that's why dogfighting[6C 19] is also important for winning the race."

"It will be hard since I have only one long range weapon....but I'll do my best."

"That's right! Since we're here, how about having a mock battle with me? Of course, under the Cannonball Fast condition of high-speed maneuver battle."

"Huh, is it okay?"

Yamada-sensei's unexpected suggestion surprised me instead.

To be able to train under real battle conditions would be extremely helpful.

"Yes! My suit is already adjusted for high-speed maneuver battle too, so I can start right away."

"Then, please take care of me."

"Okay♪"

Yamada-sensei, whose face held a huge smile, deployed her IS [Raphael Revive]. This unit, unlike Charl's customed unit, is closer to the default. The pair of physical shields is the signature of this unit.

"By the way, the shield will be used as side thruster for this. For expansion thrusters, there are 3 of them in the back side."

While saying that, Yamada-sensei unveiled her IS. In addition to a shield placement on the side, the three large thruster on the back seemed to appeal for their existence.

"Uwah, that's quite rugged isn't it. Laura's and Charlotte's weren't that big."

"These expansion thrusters were originally meant for atmospheric breakaway before being converted into this. That's why, as a trade-off for using rocket fuel, it has become this big."

"Wha!? Wouldn't rocket fuel cause an explosion?"

"As far as I know, the security measure for that is perfect, so it's okay. Look, if I set it up like this, the absolute-defense barrier's range gets wider."

"I see..."

Now that I have been at the academy for around 5 months, I've managed to remember general IS-related information.

That being said, it's all thanks to Yamada-sensei's after school supplementary lessons.

"Then, let's begin. Are you done getting ready, Orimura-kun?"

"Ah, yes"

I called [Byakushiki] and deployed it.

After that, both of us lined up at the start line.

"Then, let's start! .....3, 2, 1, Go-!"

"!"

My field of vision suddenly felt constricted. And then suddenly released at once, my field of vision became vividly clear.

This unique feeling of the field of vision for high-speed maneuver, I somehow got used to it after experiencing it for the second time today.

[Orimura-kun, you really are a fast learner, aren't you? Well then, I'm going to ascend okay?]

"Yes."

I replied to Yamada-sensei through a private channel, and followed after her.

Let's try the accelerating technique that Charl showed earlier.

Just before entering the curving track, I decelerated, and then accelerated right away to get past it.

Alright! It worked well!

While preserving the balance using the thruster's output, I tried Laura's burst-accelerating style.

After spontaneously decelerating, I raised my speed at once to slip past the solid curve, and I lined up next to Yamada-sensei just after that.

Alright, I managed to catch-uppp!?

Suddenly, Yamada-sensei pointed her hand to her back and fired a machine gun. - Damn it! I forgot that this is a combat race!

"Orimura-kun, you're quite good but you still have a long way to go."

"Kuh!"

At the end position of the side roll that I did to avoid the machine gun fire, I receive a timed grenade attack.

"!!"

Bang! The grenade exploded right in front of me.

Getting caught on the explosion, I was thrown out of course.

Hitting the floor because of gravity, even if IS has an automatic response against attack function, my whole body still hurts.

Raising my body, I saw Yamada-sensei descending.

"Good work, Orimura-kun."

"Thank you."

Just as expected of Japan's ex-representative candidate student. I'm no match for her skillful IS-control.

I wonder if she's the same person as the one who destroyed herself during the entrance examination...

I once again thought, had she not experienced some stage panic, I might have been completely beaten during the test.

"Can you stand?"

"Ah, yes. Somehow."

I used the thruster to raise my body up, and then slowly lowered my feet to the ground.

"Well then, sensei will go see the other students' condition."

"Ah, okay. Thank you very much."

"Not at all."

Yamada-sensei bowed with a smile, and then she went to the practice suit group's side, who has been struggling hard.

Maybe I should re-check the adjustment one more time.

After that, I spent one hour of the self-study period to re-adjust my IS.

◆

"Haaa-..... Today was really tiring."

Since today is finally the day before the tournament, I end up receiving Laura's extra hard training until the usage time for the arena just barely ended.

[Listen! The important thing in a high speed maneuver battle is a composed judgment. And also, a swift action based on that judgment is required. Do you get it?]

[Evade, counter-attack, defend. The judgment to decide those in an instant right? I thought I've gotten much better at those though.]

[No, you're still too soft. In the first place, your energy shield usage is too inefficient. If you didn't use it when evading, you might not need to decelerate.]

[I see.]

[Then, let's practice on it right away.]

[A-Alright!]

It ended up continuing for two hours....

Dragging my body to return to my room, I showered right away.

Along with my sweat that's washed and swept by the hot water, my fatigued senses became clear right away.

"Fuu..."

Coming out from the shower and wearing some clothes, I jumped towards my bed, and landed on my back.

Even so, although I thought I already was more or less accustomed to it, just as expected, high-speed maneuver battle is really different from normal isn't it...

Kon *Kon*

"Hmm? Yesss."

Being called with a knock, I headed to the door. Opening the door, Laura was standing there.

"Huh? What's wrong?"

"No..., well..., I was thinking if you want to have dinner together..."

Laura unusually stumbled upon her words.

The attitude too, she seemed to be unable to calm down and kept fidgeting.

"Hmm? Huh? You look quite cute."

"!!"

"I haven't seen that clothes before. Why is it?"

Laura's clothes is a long one piece dress.

That slender silhouette matched really well with her slender body and its black color contrasted with her silver hair to make her look pretty.

That string belt nonchalantly wrapping her hip looks like some kind of stitched ornament and it drew my eyes.

"T-This is! C-Charlotte bought this for me yesterday!"

"I seee. It looks nice doesn't it. You look like a lady from somewhere when you wear that."

"L-Lady...!?"

"Now then, shall we go for dinner?"

"....Lady....lady..."

"Laura"

"!? I-It's nothing! Dinner isn't it! L-Let's go then!"

Those limbs of her started moving awkwardly and her right hand and right leg moved forward at the same time .

"W-What's wrong? Are you okay?"

"E-eei! Shut up shut up!"

Smack, my back was chopped by Laura. .....Why?

"It's your fault.....because everything is your fault!"

"Uwa! Wait, stop it! .....Aaah geez!"

I took Laura's hand that had been doing a chopping dance, and swept her feet out from under her using the basics of Aikido.

"!!"

Laura's petite body casually floated. Using that chance, I slid my body along the floor and embraced Laura.

"Wha, wha...!"

"Calm down. Really."

"U, umu..."

Laura who looks just like she's being princess cradled, stopped rampaging and slowly nodded in my arms.

Managing to stop the chop dance for the present, I brought Laura to the dining hall in that position.

"Kyaaa!? What is it, what is it? Why the princess cradle !?"[6C 20]

"Bodewig-san's so lucky...."

"Me too! I want that too next!"

"Aaah! Somehow, the fact that it suits them so much feels mortifying!"

...Damn it. Right after we entered the dining hall, we were found by all the girls present there.

Actually, the fact that we didn't meet with anyone until we arrived here is really strange.

No, there's not time to think about that right now. I have to do something about these girls.

"......"

"Laura, I'm going to put you down okay?"

"Aaa, yeah...."

I put Laura, who answered in a disappointed tone for some reason, on the floor.

Anyway, she sure is light, isn't she. Girls' bodies are really light, aren't they.

"""Orimura-kun!"""

"Ah, I don't give this kind of service."

"Why!?"

"It's not fair to do it only for Laura!"

"That's right, that's right!"

I somehow managed to pacify all the girls complaining with a "boo" and made them return to their seats. Such conversation took close to 5 minutes.

"Haa, it's always noisy every time...."

"……"

Laura folded her arm, as if embracing those 2 hands that I touched earlier, while her cheeks were dyed pink.

"Hey, Laura, what are you going to eat? I think I'm going to eat the mugitoro gohan set meal."

"……."

"Heeeyy, Laura. Lauraaaa."

"W-What is it!?"

"I've been asking, what're you going to eat."

"I-Is that so! Then, fruits salad and choco pu..."

"Choco?"

"N-No! It's nothing! I didn't mean that!"

"Ah, you mean the choco pudding? That one's tasty, isn't it."

"……"

"Even so, it's unexpected isn't it. I've always thought Laura doesn't eat those kind of things."

"B-Because I was given one by Charlotte before and it turned out tasty..."

"Is that so. Then, let's not hold back today and eat it shall we?"

"U, umu..."

Just like that, me and Laura took our dinner and arrived at the table.

By the way, the mugitoro gohan set meal is a set meal with fried pork giblets and grated yam put on a boiled barley and rice.

If you ask me what's tasty about it, it's the special wasabi gravy put on the fried pork giblets that makes it first-class in tastiness.

The burning spiciness from the sauce being poured by the mugitoro gohan is a secret happiness of mine.

"Even so, Laura, are you sure you have enough for dinner with just that?"

"You're the one who said that it's more healthy not to eat much for dinner, weren't you...."

"Ah, that one huh? But, if you're not on a diet, it's not like you have to force yourself right? Laura is so light too ..."

"L-Light you said!?"

"Waaah, wait! Don't get mad! It's okay isn't it, being light!"

"That's....true, but..... Jeez...."

As if still not fully content, Laura returned her hand to the fruits salad.

That figure of eating salad while wearing a one piece dress is just like a CM or a scene from a movie.

I... I might be a little enchanted by it...

"? What was that?"

"N-No, nothing at all."

"Is that so."

Me and Laura returned to eating our meal.

With that, suddenly, our conversation stopped, but this is usual.

"........."

"........."

Both me and Laura don't dislike a lack of conversation such as this.

On the contrary, this way there's a clear distinction between calm times like these, and the noisy school's life, and I feel relaxed because of it.

"Ichika."

"Hmm?"

Unusually, Laura called out.

I stopped my hand that I used to eat and raised my face.

"Finally, it's tomorrow isn't it."

"Cannonball Fast, isn't it? I have to do my best."

"I'm gonna say this now, I'm not going to lose, you know."

"Yeah. Right back at you."

With just that few words, Laura and me started eating again.

Being my first high-speed maneuver official match, the feeling of nervousness and anticipation about the unknown, swelled out from my chest.

◆

Cannonball Fast match day.

The grounds are saturated with people, and the sky is filled with fireworks that let out thunderous claps.

"Oooh, the weather sure is clear isn't it."

While looking up at the autumn's clear sky, I obstructed the sun rays using my hand.

Today's program is, first, the second year's race, after that, it will be the first years with personal IS race, followed by the first years training unit race. And then, it will be an exhibition race from the third years.

"Ichika, you are already here. Get ready, quickly."

"Alright, Houki. Well, I've been thinking, a lot of people has come to watch, don't you think?"

"Aa, seems like it's because of the aforementioned IS industry related personnel and government related personnel coming. Many of the spectators are just guards for said people."

Even leaving those aside, to have this many attendants assembled, has once again taught me about the fact that IS has a lot of attention on it.

Even so, in front of this large number of adults, somehow I have to get a result that's not embarrassing.

Now that you mention it, where was Ran seated again? Ummm....

While remembering the seat's number, I turned my eyes to that direction.

Looking for Ran using the IS' zoom function, suddenly my ears were being pulled.

"Ouchouchouch!?"

"Come quickly! Really....it's not like you're a child or something."

"L-Look here! The one treating me like a child is y... ouchouchouch!"

"The teachers are going to get mad at me if you don't come!"

"I understand! I understand so let me go!"

"Really."

Uwaaah, it hurts. I thought my ears were going to be torn off.

However, well, it's also true that there's no point dawdling here, so I also returned to the pit.

I hope Ran doesn't get lost. ....Well, there's no way that is going to happen, I guess

◆

"Ummm....F45...F45...."

Ran was walking while looking downward, checking her seat number on the map at her hand.

Don!

"Kya!?"

"Huh?"

Because she was walking while looking for her seat, sure enough, she bumped into someone.

Ran hurriedly regained her composure and bowed her head.

"I... I'm sorry."

"No, it's okay. Don't worry about it."

The other party is an older woman with fluttering, beautiful blond hair, who releases her overflowing adult's charm.

Uwaaah...what a beautiful woman....

She should be around the later half of her twenties, I think. Her body, which is covered with a gorgeous red suit, is the figure of a woman at her peak.

Her eyes were covered by sharp model sunglasses.

Such voluptuous breasts, slender waist, and tight hip would attract people's eyes regardless of their gender.

Ran compared her own figure to that person's, and she shrank, thinking about her inferior body.

"Are you hurt?"

"N-No. I'm sorry."

"Is that so, I'm glad. Then, please be careful."

"Y-Yes."

The blond woman slightly waved her hand, and Ran slipped past her through the side.

Just before they passed each other, the gold earrings on her ears slowly shined.

J-Just as expected from an IS-related event. People from all over the world have come to this event, haven't they?

Ran unintentionally looked down to her chest.

I'm still in my growing period so it should be okay....right?.

Ran, who had finally found her seat around 10 minutes after that, sat there and excitedly waited for the start of the race.

To think that I'll be able to see Ichika-san's figure in an IS, live!

Furthermore, today, there's also the birthday party after this event.

Ran forgot about her usual Student Council President self, who puts on a cool and calm front, and her heart bounced around just like a child waiting for a circus show to start.

◆

Waaa.....! A grand cheering sound could be heard even in the pit.

The 2nd year race is taking place now. It seems like a dead heat battle, with the participants overtaking each other, a big free-for-all where the winner can't be decided up until the end.

"Huh? Is this 2nd year's Sara Welkin, England's representative candidate student?"

"That's right. She doesn't have a personal IS, but she's an excellent pilot."

I also learned some piloting skill from her, added Cecilia. She already deployed [Blue Tears]'s high-speed maneuver package, [Strike Gunner].

She's really motivated isn't she. I won't lose either.

Just like her, I also deployed my IS and started getting ready for the race.

Beside me and Cecilia, the other participants, Houki, Rin, Laura, and Charl were already waiting in the pit.

"Even so, Rin's package is really bulky isn't it."

"Fufun. Nice isn't it. The maximum speed of this package won't lose even to Cecilia's."

That high-speed maneuver package [Feng], besides the thruster that looks like 4 expansion thrusters stacked together, there's also the additional chest armor that extends forward. ....Could it be, is she going to ram into others using that....

The [Impact Cannons] are facing the sides, I think they're configured for interference fire.

It really is up to Cannonball Fast's specification isn't it.

In that regards, Rin might have the most advantage between us.

Cecilia's package is originally designed for breaking away from a raid, and the other members' IS have a makeshift high-speed maneuver specification. Rin, the only one whose IS is completely tuned for the Cannonball Fast specifications, is one step ahead of us.

"Fuun. I'll teach you that a battle is not solely decided by the weapon that is used."

The one saying that cool line is Houki.

In the end, it seems that she'll be dealing with the energy insufficiency by manually controlling the fold-out armor.

"A battle is all about the flow. The one who takes control of the flow will win."

Laura, who equipped 3 additional thrusters on the back joined in the conversation.

Even if it's not personalized equipment, she seems to also have some confidence in the race since the new thruster model is pretty good efficiency-wise.

"Everyone, let's go all out on the fight"

The one summing it up by saying that was Charl. Just like Laura, she also equipped 3 additional thrusters, 2 on her left and right shoulder and 1 on her back.

The custom wing thrusters that have been fitted onto Charl's unit, which was already custom made in the first place, have transformed into a shape that further increases the output thrust.

"Everyone, are you ready? Please move to the starting line."

Yamada-sensei's voice, which has become a little leisurely, resounded.

Each one of us nodded, and started to move to the starting line by following the guidance marker.

[Byakushiki]'s condition is also good today, so I have to do my best.

[Now, the first year personal IS user's race will begin!]

The loud announcement echoed.

We all reached our starting position, and began to ignite our thrusters.

Hyuuuuuiiii......

Pulling down the hyper sensor visor used for high-speed maneuver, I focused all my senses.

Over the center of the full-house audience, the signal lamp lighted up.

3.....2.....1.....Go!

"......!"

The scenery was distorted for an instant due to the sudden acceleration. Soon after, the vision field caught up to the speed due to the support of the hyper sensor, but no matter what, I still got bewildered for an instant during the start of the acceleration.

Cecilia rushed out first didn't she...!

In the blink of an eye, the first corner was passed, and Cecilia managed to gain the lead.

"Ichika, I'm going first!!"

Rin, who said that, suddenly began a fight.

"H-Hey!"

"I got you, Cecilia!"

The [Impact Cannon] that was facing sideways was directed forward and continuously shot.

Cecilia rolled to evade those shots. With that movement, Rin used an explosive acceleration to overtake her.

"Kuh! Not bad!"

"Hehen! Too slow!"

"-how naive."

"!?"

Matching her timing with Rin's acceleration, Laura who followed her right behind came forward. It seems she used the slipstream with her IS to wait for a chance.

"Damn it!"

"Too slow!"

Although she tried to direct her [Impact Cannon] hastily, Laura's large caliber revolver cannon was fired a bit faster.

It wasn't a direct hit, but in a high-speed maneuver state, being shot at got Rin strayed quite far from the course line.

Furthermore, Laura's diversionary fire reached me as well and separated us even further.

"Kuh! Just as expected, Laura is really strong!"

I also accelerated to catch up to her, but the difference got bigger at every corner.

"Ichika, I'm going first."

"Heyy, even Charl too?"

"It's because timing is the most important thing in Cannonball Fast. Well then."

Charl, who further increased her output power, closely pressed Laura.

Just when I was going to focus my senses to follow after them closely, a red laser jumped in.

"This is - Houki!"

"I'm sorry, but could you let me through!"

"As if I'll let you do that easily!"

[Akatsubaki]'s katana, which can be used for both short and long range, released lasers while Houki closed in on me.

I deployed [Setsura]'s beam claw and began to shoot it.

"Not bad!"

"As if I'll let you shoot me down that easily!"

Cecilia and Rin added their attacks to us, who were dog-fighting in close range.

Don! The [Impact Cannon]'s bullet and [Blue Tears]' cannon rounds hit the shock absorbing wall and exploded.

"The race is not over!"

"The real race has just started!"

The climax of the battle race. When it entered the second lap, an incident occurred.

Suddenly, an IS that came flying from the sky shot at Laura and Charl, who were on the lead.

"!?"

"That's....[Silent Zephyrs]!!"

Without even directing his gaze at Laura and Charl who went off course, the sudden aggressor's lips curved upwards to reveal a smirk.

Chapter 4: Heart Breaker

"Kyaaa!"[6D 1]

Someone's scream could be heard. Because of the sudden turn of events, the tournament's organizer was left not knowing how to react, and panic spread through the audience.

"Calm down! Everyone, calm down and go to the shelter!"

The staff's voice reverberated, but no one listened to the transmission.

"Kya...!"

Ran was bumped by someone's arm and knocked off balance.

About to fall, her body was caught by a gentle hand.

"Are you okay?"

"Y-Yes...."

The hand's owner was Tatenashi.

Today, Ran's heart throbbed to an older beauty twice.

Uwaa, so cool....

"Geez, this is really troubling. For now, until the chaos subsides, it's better to stay away from the pathway. Come here."

Having her arms naturally pulled, Ran followed Tatenashi.

Ran was led to a staff room beyond a door that could only be opened by authorized people.

"Well then, onee-chan has a little something to do so please stay here for the time being."

"Umm..."

"If someone comes, please explain to them that the student council president told you to stay here."

"S-Student council president..."

She's a student council president herself, but clearly unlike that lady, who can make a clear distinction on what's important in front of her, Ran was very nervous and unable to calm down.

"See ya."

That throwing finger pose she made looked so cool.

Ran was dumbfounded for a while after Tatenashi left and was unable to move.

....Wha!?

She remembered the moment where the offender trespassed into the race and began firing its cannon toward Ichika.

He should be okay, right?....Ichika-san....

Along with the hands that grabbed each other tightly, just like a prayer, a wish was made.

◆

"Are you okay! Laura, Charl!""

I immediately moved to the side of those two, who had crashed into the wall, and deployed Setsura's energy shield.

In the next instant, attacks from the BT rifle were raining down.

"Kuh...!!"

"Ichika-san! Leave that IS to me!"

"Cecilia!? Hey!"

"BT unit 2 [Silent Zephyrs]....! This time surely!"

Not heeding to my call, Cecilia headed towards the assaulter - Silent Zephyrs - alone.

But, unlike a normal operation, Cecilia was equipped with the high-speed maneuver package, and so, her Bits' shooting ability had been sealed. A reduction in the firepower of that large BT rifle that also seemed to be intended, was also something that couldn't be avoided.

"Ichika! I'll depend on you for defense!"

Rin hastily aided Cecilia, who had just left towards the Silent Zephyrs.

Cecilia's beam shot, and Rin's shock wave cannon aimed and fired at once towards the enemy.

"You're not getting away!"

"Gooooo!"

But, Silent Zephyrs didn't even evade the attacks, and a defiant smile surfaced on the pilot's face.

Right when the attacks made contact, Pang, an umbrella shaped beam surfaced.

"Wh...!?"

"Kuh! Just as expected, a shield bit.... Rin-san! Let's do a multi-directional attack!"

"Don't boss me around! Geez, I'll do it anyway!"

Cecilia and Rin's simultaneous attack started. As if to match that, Silent Zephyrs soared.

"That's the unit that was plundered from England...."

"Laura! Are you good enough to move?"

"No, I'm still unable to enter the battlefield directly. At least I'll give some fire support with my cannon."

After saying that, Laura raised her body, faced Silent Zephyrs and began the bombardment.

But, as if she was being mocked because of the overwhelming difference in the specs of the machines, she was unable to catch the Silent Zephyrs' figure.

"Ku!"

While taking on both Cecilia and Rin, the fluttering Silent Zephyrs flew through the sky, as if it was dancing.

"Ichika! Leave this here to me! Go with Houki to Cecilia's location!"

"Charl! What's your damage level?!"

"The thrusters completely died off. I can still fly using the PIC, but against that unit I won't be able to catch up."

Saying those words, Charl disconnected the additional thrusters in her unit. Those crumpled and crushed things won't be able to fly through the sky anymore, will they?

"I'm going to defend Laura while she does the support bombardment, so go, Ichika!"

"Got it!"

Leaving Laura's defense to Charl, I flew towards Silent Zephyrs.

On the way, I met up with Houki, and together brought the battle a close quarter combat with a linked attack.

"Uoooo!"

"……"

Silent Zephyrs accepted the challenge with the bayonet that's attached to the tip of its rifle.

I attacked continuously using Yukihira Ni-gata in my right hand and Setsura Claw Normal Blade mode in my left hand, but just like before, the shield bit blocked my attack with miraculous timing and, I couldn't make any decisive hit.

"What's your target! [Phantom Task]!"

".....What a joke."

"Wha!?"

Parrying Yukihira Ni-gata, a kick came down on me.

"Gu!"

"Ichika!"

Thanks to Houki's charge I barely managed to escape from the rifle's point-blank attack.

But, Silent Zephyrs - who had just done that - used the Flexible BT attack. The beam flexibly bent in its path and locked on to me.

"Uoooo!!"

Changing Setsura to Shield Mode, I somehow blocked that attack.

But, I crashed into the wall on my back because of that.

"Gaha!"

Seeing me wide open, Silent Zephyrs didn't let the chance go.

"Die..."

Bakan! The splited from its center rifle was aimed at me at max power.

The electrical discharge shaped energy that overflowed from that rifle was released in my direction -

◆

"Fufu, as expected of **M**. To hold her ground while facing that many personal IS users."

While looking at the assaulter, at **M's** battle, beyond her sunglasses, the woman narrowed her eyes as if she was enjoying it.

Looking at her clearly, it's the lady that bumped into Ran earlier.

"Even so, it's actually not that great isn't it. I wish they could work harder though."

Behind her, a voice called out for this lady that just sighed.

"Ara, for someone who forcibly participated in the event, isn't that remark a little too much?"

The lady didn't turn around.

She already knew whose voice called for her. -Sarashiki Tatenashi, while being IS academy student council president, she's a genius who has already attained the right of freely choosing her nationality while still being a student. She's currently Russia's representative. Not a representative candidate, but a representative.

"IS [Gustoi Touman Moskwa (Moscow's Deep Mist)] isn't it? Your unit's name?"

"That's its old name. It's called [Mysterious Lady] now. "

"I see."

The woman turned back. In an instant, a glistening knife was thrown.

"A woman without manners isn't attractive, you know. "

Tatenashi, who deployed her IS in an instant, repelled it using the whip sword [Rusty Nail].

And then just like that, she used that sword which bends just like a whip to aim at the woman.

"You too, aren't you quite rude to someone you've just met for the first time?"

While taking off her sunglasses, the woman deployed the arm part of her own IS and blocked the whip sword's attack with it.

"[Phantom Task], what's your target I wonder?"

"Ara, there's no way I'm gonna tell you ain't I? Since we finally managed to make a good situation too."

"Then I'm going to hear it even if I have to force it from your mouth."

"I wonder if you're up to the task? Sarashiki Tatenashi-san?"

"I already said I will, [Squall (Heavy Rain)]."

Letting go of the whip sword, she called out her spear at the same time.

That thing which has a 4-barrel gatling gun inside of it, made some kind of formation and fired at once.

Dodododododo-!![6D 2]

"....."

Tatenashi managed to accurately grasp her opponent, but there was no leeway in her face.

Squall's figure was encompassed by a yellow cocoon, and not even one bullet managed to reach her.

"How about we stop this?"

"...."

"Your unit won't be able to break through mine. You also know this right?"

"If you can't win, if you can't defeat the enemy, then you shouldn't fight. That might be a wise choice - but!"

Tatenashi changed the water veil into a blade, and shifted to an offensive move at once.

"I am Sarashiki Tatenashi, IS academy's student council president, and that's why I will at least conduct myself in a way that befits that title...!"

Swiftly evading the blow of the high-speed assault caused by the lance that was clad in a water drill, Squall once again threw her knife.

"Such a thing!"

The blade of water cut the knife to pieces. But, in that instant a big explosion occurred originating from it.

"!?"

A thick black smoke enveloped her.

Of course, for an IS, this level of sight impediment was the same as nothing, but in Tatenashi's hyper sensor, she could see the figure of Squall escaping.

"Kuh.... With this, it's the 2nd time in a row I let the enemy escape, isn't it."

In a direct confrontation, Tatenashi was quite capable.

But, if the enemy focuses on fleeing, there's a chance she would be unable to stop the enemy from escaping. Also, because she is a human, it is impossible everything could go perfectly.

Haa.... Lately, I haven't shown anything good, have I. I have no right to make fun of Ichika-kun, right.

Unlike her usual easygoing attitude, a truly mortified Tatenashi stood there.

◆

"Kyaa!?"

"Rin!?"

Rin, who received Silent Zephyr rifle's maximum power attack, was fiercely blown away.

"M-Moron! Why are you covering for me....Hey! Rin!"

"You're so noisy....It's because you're so stupid.... Geho geho[6D 3]!"

"Rin!!"

Rin, who took the blow in my place, faced me to punch me, and then lost consciousness.

I think it was probably because the Absolute Defense Field ability of the IS, that makes the pilot lose their consciousness when it receives a critical damage, activated. I also experienced it once during the summer, and it was quite tough.

"Damn it!!"

I raised my body, but at that point, Setsura's energy had already been depleted.

And then once again, this time in a shield-less condition, Silent Zephyrs' attack was directed at me.

"I won't let you!"

Right before firing, this time it's Cecilia who comes in the space between me and Silent Zephyrs.

Furthermore, it was not to become a shield, instead she made use of the high-maneuver package high output to do a body ram attack.

"Cecilia!"

"Ichika-san, use this chance to go to Houki-san for a resupply! I'll take over this place until then!"

Cecilia soared as if to pin down Silent Zephyrs, and just like that she pushed into the arena's shield barrier.

Firing her thruster to rush at the shield as if to crash the enemy to it for many times, the barrier finally broke during the fourth charge.

"Damn you...."

"This BT unit-01 [Blue Tears]'s power, I'll show it to you to your heart's content!"

From the crevice of the broken barrier, 2 blue units flew out.

Accelerating together at once, they flew to the town area.

"Kuh! Cecilia, wait for me!"

I took Houki's hand, which was flying this way, and requested a resupply as soon as she could.

"Please, Houki! Initiate [Kenran Butou]!"

"T-That's... not something that can be used conveniently like that...."

"Please somehow do something about it! Cecilia alone won't be able to restrain that machine!"

I shook Houki from my impatience.

But, it seemed that my desperation was conveyed to her, and Houki nodded with strength.

"I-I got it. I'll give it a try."

Houki touched my shoulder. I naturally knelt, and lowered my head.

"Alright! Please do!"

".....The same feeling as that time. I - "

Houki closed her eyelids to fully concentrate her senses.

"I - want to fight together with Ichika. I want to be Ichika's strength...."

Bunnn....

"Answer me, Akatsubaki! Haaaaa!!"

At that moment, from the shoulder that was touched by Houki, a warm torrent could be felt.

"T-This is.... It works, Ichika! I managed to initiate [Kenran Butou]!"

"Aa! Thanks, Houki!"

"I-It's nothing.... I'm satisfied if I can be of help to you."

"Then, I leave this place to you. Please resupply Rin's energy too."

"Leave it to me. You should go after Cecilia right away ."

"Aa!"

After replying, I turned my thruster output to the max.

"I'm coming now, Cecilia!"

◆

Kuh! Just as expected, she's strong...!!

While keeping her pace with her enemy, Cecilia directed the high-output BT long rifle [Blue Pierce] towards Silent Zephyrs.

But, as if carefully aiming for that attack timing, the distance between them opened again due to the obstruction from the barrage and shield bit.

"......"

M disinterestedly repeated her attacks toward Cecilia over and over again while keeping her silence.

Accuracy, overwhelming barrage speed, and to top it all, Flexible (Deviation Shoot), were making Cecilia suffer .

I will get hit sooner or later if it stays this way. Now that things have come to this....!

Cecilia summoned the closed range blade [Interceptor] into her tightly clenching hand, and charged at Silent Zephyrs at once.

"I got you!"

"Fun...."

M, as if to say she'll play the game, summoned a knife to her left hand and started a close range battle with Cecilia.

Kin! When the two blades hit each other, a sharp sound and sparks flew.

"Ku..!"

A close ranged battle in a supersonic condition harshly consumed a person's mental power.

But, Cecilia, as if to say that she won't lose even in obstinacy, refused to back down.

Kin, *Gin!* *Ga....Gin!*[6D 4]

While the one handed close quarter battle continued, **M** dared to decrease her speed.

And then, the chasing Cecilia came almost crashing into the high-speed road's multi-level crossing point which suddenly entered her field vision.

"You!!"

Cecilia who got out from the dangerous situation using Alley Roll (High speed rotating maneuver) was enraged at **M** who laughed as if to make fun of her.

She intends to play around with me!?

Cecilia swung downward her blade once again. But, with a flash, that blade was repelled and flew away.

"!?"

"...You're already dead."

It was a cold voice that made you tremble. And then, a merciless barrage poured down on Cecilia's whole body.

"Aa!"

The shield energy was gone at once, and the rifle that was in her left hand was destroyed.

Just when she thought she would get wounded from crashing to the ground, Cecilia barely managed to do an emergency pull-out just before she reached the ground.

"It's over."

From the rifle tip that was installed with a bayonet, a blue light was released.

"Not...yet. I still have my trump card!"

Shouting, Cecilia hit the trigger inside her heart.

High-speed maneuver package [Strike Gunner]. Out of all the techniques to redirect all of the propulsion power of the bit, it was technique that was said to be a forbidden maneuver, a technique that must never be used -

"Haaaaaaaa!? Blue Tears Full Burst!"

Simultaneous shots from all of the closed cannon mouth. A simultaneous discharge of four cannons that blew away the parts.

This was something that could be said to be the worst situation, dismantling a unit in mid-air. But, for Cecilia who couldn't use Flexible (Deviation Shoot), this was the highest level of attack that could be said to have the timing of a finishing blow.

"This is your trump card? Don't make me laugh!"

M raised her voice. And then, together with a laughing voice, she evaded all of Cecilia's shots with high speed rolls.

"Wha!?"

"Die."

Zaku! The bayonet pierced Cecilia's two arms.

"Aaaaah!"

A scream escaped due to the extreme pain.

Hearing that voice, **M's** lips evilly contorted.

"-Please, Blue Tears - "

Cecilia directed both her pierced right and left hands, that were no longer able to grasp anything, toward **M**.

Inside her heart, a blue drop of water fell.

That drop of water that fell on the water's surface made a wide ripple.

Aah, is that so. Blue Tears is, in a word -

".....?"

M was unable to figure out Cecilia's plan.

And, a smile slowly surfaced on Cecilia's face.

"Bang."

She made a pistol shape with her hand. There was nothing fired from that fingertip.

But, the next instant, **M** was pierced by 4 beams from behind her.

"!?"

A technique that could only be used with a highly skilled manipulation of BT energy, Flexible (Deviation Shoot).

Cecilia finally managed to make that technique her own in the last moment, but her unit that lost its propulsion power in supersonic condition was unable to maintain its appearance and started to break down.

So this is as far as I can go isn't it..... But, I managed to return a blow.

Cecilia accepted her defeat with a sportsman's-like attitude. But, at the moment she gave up, a voice reached her.

"Sorry to make you wait!"

Byakushiki, rushing in at full blast, cut Silent Zephyrs' rifle, and used its hand to take back Cecilia.

◆

"Cecilia! Get a hold of yourself!"

"Ara[6D 5], Ichika-san.... Fufu, you're late."

"Sorry about that!"

"Can't be helped. I'll forgive you with a....date...."

"!? Hey, Cecilia! Cecilia!"

Cecilia's vital signs were sent from the hyper sensor toward the shouting me. It seems she just lost consciousness.

Pushing yourself too hard, geez...

I found a building's roof where it seemed I could get down, and landed there.

It seems the IS stopped the bleeding in the wounds on her arms..... But, it could be bad if it's not tended to quickly.

At IS academy, there's a facility that's on the same level as a university's hospital. For the time being, let's bring her back to the academy.

"....!"

I, who was about to stand up and fly away, got startled and stopped my movement.

Silent Zephyrs was coldly looking down at us with its back facing the sun. There's an icy presence accompanying that gaze, like the pressure you feel when there's a knife pointed in point blank range at your neck.

"You bastard....."

I scowled at the enemy that hurt Cecilia. The enemy's face can't be seen because of the visor, but the enmity I gave out should have reached the enemy.

But, what should I do? Can I fight against that IS while protecting Cecilia?

But, whether it's impossible or not, if it's to protect a friend then I have to do it. I strengthened my resolve, and tightly grasped Yukihira Ni-gata.

" - Squall huh, what is it? .... I got it, I'll go back."

"Wha...?"

"...Fun..."

Silent Zephyrs glanced at me once, and then turned her back and flew away.

"That person, what's the matter with her...?"

Even after Silent Zephyrs left, bound by that unpleasant pressure, I was unable to move for a while.

◆

"One, two"

"Ichika, happy birthday!"

With Charl's voice as the signal, the sound of party crackers reverberated.

"Ye-Yes. Thank you."

The time is 5 o'clock in the afternoon, the place: Orimura family residence..... it's fine up to this point.

"What's with this number of people....."

Let's sort out the party members.

The usual faces. Houki, Cecilia, Rin, Charl and Laura.

And then Ran. There are also my male friends Gotanda Dan and Mitarai Kazuma.

Furthermore, there's the student council members Tatenashi-san, Nohohon-san, and Utsuho-san.

On top of that, for unknown reasons, even the ace of newspaper club, Mayuzumi Kaoruko-san, was here. The living room, which wasn't that big in the first place, almost burst.

Haa[6D 6]*. I'm concerned about how they can make that much of a noise after that kind of incident.*

No, it's the opposite isn't it. Maybe it's because it's after that kind of incident that they want to make some noise.

In the end, Phantom Task's objective is unclear too this time even after the temporary settlement was reached.

Seeing the academy's authorized people's, including both Chifuyu-nee and Yamada-sensei's, hurried movements, it seems this is a really big problem isn't it.

It's because we used IS in the town district after all.....”

I was also investigated. In the end, I wasn't released until past 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

"U-U-Umm, Ichika-san! I, I baked a cake for you!"

"Oo, Ran. How was today? Did you have fun? Well, even if I said that, it got messy midway though."

"Y-Yes! Umm, it was great! Ah, please have some of the cake!"

"Thank you."

I took the plate that Ran held out, and ate the cake on top of the plate.

It was a cream and chocolate cake from cocoa based sponge cake. The smooth texture and big volume of cream made a good amount of sweetness unfold inside your mouth when you took a bite out of it.

"This tastes really good. Did you make this by yourself ?"

"Y-Yes!"

"You are really good at cooking aren't you. Hm, you're going to be a good wife."

"W-Wife...!?"

"Ichika, here, Ramen."

"Owa!? Rin, that's so sudden."

"It's better while it's still hot. After all, the noodle is handmade by me. Fufun."

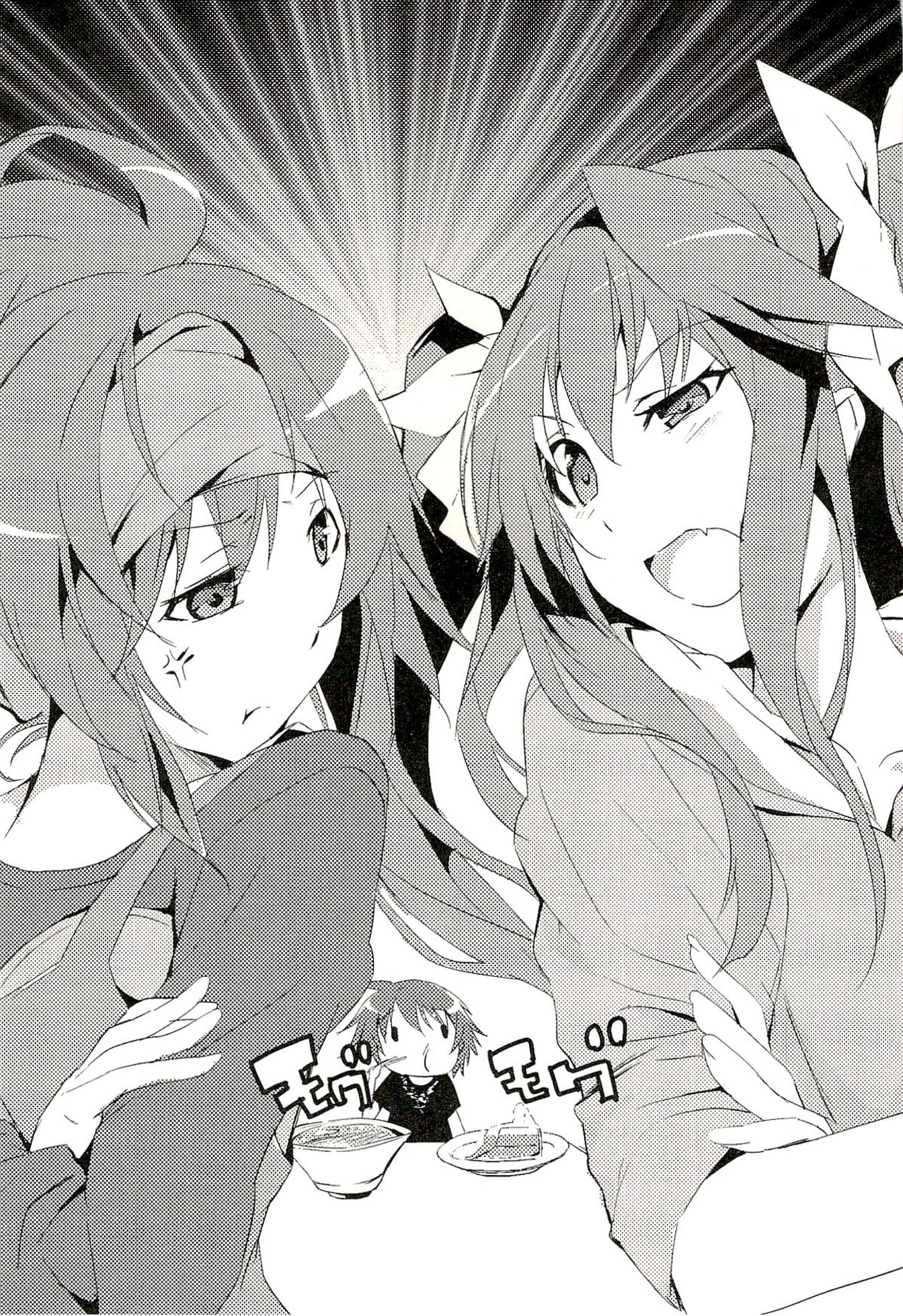
Rin boasted while sticking out her chest.

Indeed, the noodle floating on the golden soup looks delicious. Could it be that this chashu is hand made too? How elaborate.

"Mu, Rin-san..."

"Hmm? Ah, I was wondering who it was, so it's Ran isn't it? Did your body grow a little bit taller?"

"I, I don't want to be told about that by you!"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Rin and Ran, the situation became stormy in an instant .

I wonder why these two can't get along with each other? It's been like this since our junior high school days .

Once, I wanted to ask about the reason, but somehow I got the feeling it will bring unnecessary trouble instead.

"T-Then, Itadakimasu."

Slurp *slurp* I vigorously ate the ramen.

The soup that's nicely coordinated with the noodles tasted very seafood-based-*dashi-shiru*[6D 7] like. It's very refreshing and the aftertaste is great.

The noodles are also chewy enough, it bounced when you cut it inside the mouth.

While chewing on it, the soup and noodles' refined taste spreads out inside your mouth, it somehow feels relieving.

"Hm. This tastes really great. Rin, did your cooking skill improve again?"

"Well, more or less! Although I'm a representative candidate student, I also trained to be a b-bride."

"Is that so. I see."

"...What's with your lack of response...."

"Wha?"

"It's nothing!"

I wonder why, Rin is mad at me.

For the time being, I put the porcelain bowl down and headed to the kitchen.

"Cecilia."

"Y-Yes?"

The person standing there with the bandaged right hand was Cecilia.

Her wound wasn't a light one, but it seems it will return to normal in a week due to receiving activated regenerative treatment.

She was advised to stay in the hospital for today, but she strongly opposed the idea thus she's attending the birthday party like this.

"Your wound, is there no problem? You should rest if it's painful."

"No! This much is not enough to be considered an injury! R-Rather than that, Ichika-san!"

"Hmm?"

"Happy birthday. And then, please take this."

"What's this box?"

"I-It's a present. Please open it."

"Alright."

I smoothly removed the packaging paper from it, and then opened the lid.

"Ooh? It's a tea set."

"*Gohon*! This is English imperial family's purveyor, [Einsley]'s high class tea set. Also, I also put inside leaves for first-grade tea that I love to drink inside."

"Oo...it looks amazing. Thank you. I'll treasure it."

"N-Not at all. This much is nothing. R-Rather than that , how about next time we - "

"Ichika-kun, did you eat well?"

"T-Tatenashi-san!? P-Please stop hugging me from behind!"

"*Fufun*, it's fine isn't it. It's not like you'll lose anything."

"I will! Such as my pure heart for instance!"

"Ara, then it's just perfect isn't it. Please console this heart-broken onee-san."

"Heart-broken....?"

Even while all this happened, Tatenashi-san's voluptuous chest bulge was pressing on my back.

"Wait a minute! Sarashiki-kaichou![6D 8]"

Cecilia's raising her voice.

She tried to remove Tatenashi-san from me, but Tatenashi-san's body was closely glued to me and she wouldn't move away.

"G-Get away from him please!"

"An, call me Tatenashi"

"That kind of thing doesn't matter! Please get away from Ichika-san right aw...ouch!"

"S-Stupid. Cecilia, your right hand is injured so take it easy. Are you okay?"

"I, I'm okay....n-no! I'm not okay. Ichika-san!"

"Which one is it...."

"*Gohon*! Because my right hand is injured, please feed me the cake."

"Y-yes, no problem...."

First of all, I took a piece of the cut cake, and then fed Cecilia.

"Here, aaahhnnn...."

"A, a...."

"Aaah!? Cecilia, what are you doing!? Even though this is Ichika's birthday!"

Damn it! Charl found us.

Cecilia, who ate the cake with a big bite, closed her eyes and let out a sigh in bliss.

"Fuuu... It's a privilege."

"I-Ichika! That's not fair! Rather, Tatenashi-san what are you doing too! Ah, really!"

The restless Charl spoke this and that. ...Somehow, she really understands other people's problems doesn't she.

"Arara. Well then Cecilia-chan, shall we go that way?"

"Yeah. I'm satisfied now so I don't mind. Ha....♪"

The two-girls group who seemed satisfied for some reason headed to the living room.

I, who was left in the kitchen alone with Charl, pulled out the watch that Charl bought for me when I remembered something.

"Thank you for this. I'm going to use this from now on. "

"Y-Yeah! Please take care of it!"

That golden white wristwatch, aside from the usual wristwatch functionality, you can also see current temperature, humidity, weather, and even the latest news too. For the battery used in the wristwatch, of course there's the latest air battery, solar battery, and there's even a heat power generator too. This watch sure is amazing.

"Next time tell me Charl's birthday too. I definitely gonna return this favor during that time."

"Y-Yeah. I'm looking forward to it."

"Even so, today sure is troublesome isn't it. Who was it , that person."

"...why do you change the topic to something like this only when talking with me...."

"Huh?"

"N-Nothing!"

Charl waved her hands. After that she cleared her throat once, and then she gave her opinion.

"I heard it was an international terrorist, but if they possess IS then the situation has become grave hasn't it. It's because even if it's only one, depending on the circumstances, it might mean that they possess a military power equal to a country."

Of course, every unit has its limit due to the quantum transformation capacity, so it's still safe as long as they haven't removed that lock, she added.

"Is that so...."

"Even the academy side is on alert right now, so it should be safe for now I guess?"

"It'll be nice if that's the case...."

I remembered about that assaulter again.

Even if it's covered behind visors, those eyes looks like it held deep hatred toward me.

"........"

"Here now, don't look that grim."

"Huh? D-Did I make that kind of grim face?"

"Yeah. If you worry about things too much, happiness will run away from you you know. Here, smile, smile."

"A-Alright."

Charl touched her mouth with her own hand, push the tip of her lips as if to make a smile.

That extraordinary smile made my heart bounce a little
.

"Ah, ummm, Laura said that she wants you to come to the garden later."

"Hmm? Then, I guess I'll go now."

"Yeah. See you later, Ichika."

Bidding farewell to Charl, I passed through the living room and went outside.

"Y-You're late!"

"Uh, sorry."

"A, aah, no, you're not.... it's actually just me who's selfishly waiting for you. I retract my previous remark."

"Huh? Is that so."

To retract her previous remark, it's rare for Laura to do that. Her awkwardness in adapting and being honest are her selling points though.

"I-I-Ichika!"

"Wha? -Uwaah!?"

Suddenly a knife targeted my neck. I jumped back at once, but when I looked at it closely, the knife actually stopped just right in front of me.

I-I thought I was going to be killed....

"I-I'll give you this knife!"

"...What?"

"It's a birthday present! This is the one that I usually use in real battle! Its cutting ability is excellent, and it also has a high endurance. Take it!"

"A-Alright!"

Taking the knife from Laura's hand, she also handed me the sheath associated with that knife.

That knife, with a blade of length exceeding 20 centimeters, is clearly one that's used for military use. The black metal exterior released a silent overbearing presence.

Needless to say, it's a [tool for killing].

"Ah."

"W-what is it!?"

"The grip, it looks cool doesn't it"

"I-Is that so. The holster is quite good too you know. Look!"

"Thank you."

When the belt on the sheath is put on, it becomes a holster.

The sheath was to be positioned horizontally under the armpit, in order to make it easy for the knife to be drawn with just the slightest movement.

"....As a fellow warrior, you understand the meaning behind handing my weapon to you, don't you...."

"Huh? What did you say?"

"N-nothing! I'm done! I'll be going now!"

"Ah, hey, I said hey!"

"W-what is it!?"

"Thanks, Laura."

"!!"

I wonder if it's because my words were unexpected, or just because she was purely feeling shy, Laura became bright red up to her ears before she went away with a " F-Fuhn!" snuffle.

What's wrong with her, that Laura.

"So this is where you've been, Ichika."

"Aa, Houki? How was it? Did you eat enough?"

"It's your birthday isn't it. Or what? Do I usually look like I'm eating all the time?:

"N-no, that's not what I meant..."

"Fu fu, it's a joke."

I was taken aback by Houki who let a small laugh escape from her.

Somehow, it looks like her mood is remarkably good isn't it.

"Ichika, I'll give you this for your birthday present."

Saying that, she handed me a bag.

From that not so big bag, I can somehow see a wrapping paper in it.

"Houki, this is?"

"Open it."

Following her words, I took the present from the bag, and removed the wrapping paper. Inside of the wrapping paper was...

"Ooh? It's a kimono."

"I-I found a good cloth at my home. I had that sewn into this kimono."

"Ooh, I'll try it next time. Thanks, Houki."

"U, umu. I also put the obi inside right?"

"Ah, is it this one? It looks expensive."

"Don't worry about the price. That's.... I-It's a pair set with mine..."

"Hmm?"

"Y-you don't have to hear it!"

Houki suddenly became flustered. What's wrong with her?

"Let's wear it in the dorm next time."

"U, umu. Please announce it to me when you plan to wear it beforehand o-okay!?"

"Okay, okay. Even so, a kimono isn't it? I've always wanted one."

It got a calming pattern too. If it's like this it seems I can use it as a casual wear in my room.

You also always borrow a yukata when you go to an onsen too. That kind of clothing is really relaxing isn't it.

"Rather, somehow this present makes the one I gave you look really worthless doesn't it."

"N-Not at all. I really like this one too so it doesn't matter."

Saying that, Houki played with the ribbon in her ponytail. That white ribbon is the one that I gave as a present on her birthday on 7th July.

"........."

"You've been using it all the time since that day haven't you? I somehow feel happy about it."

"I-It's not like I use the same one every day you know!?"

"I know. Around two times a week right?"

"Uu.... You really pay a lot of attention to it didn't you."

"Because it's Houki after all."

"I-Is that so.... So it's because it is me isn't it...."

Could it be that she's happy being paid attention to, Houki's blushing at her cheek and fidgeting with her fingers.

As someone who knows her usual demeanor, when she shows this kind of meek demeanor somehow my heart would mysteriously throb.

"I-I-Ichika, next time, that's...."

"Hmm? Hey, that's Dan and Utsuho-san isn't it? I wonder what they're doing. I can't hear what they're talking about from here."

"H-Hey. Eavesdropping is not good you know."

"It's fine, it's fine, just a little."

I pulled Houki's arm and went closer to the living room where the two of them resided.

"S-So we meet again huh? Ahaha...."

"T-That's right..."

"....."

"....."

""Umm, hey""

After the silence, the two of them opened their mouth at the same time.

They respectively realized about this, and then averted their gaze from each other.

"P-Please go ahead..."

"N-No, you go first..."

""".......""

And then, the silence continued once again. Both of their faces became bright red.

"What are they doing?"

"Beats me. Usually people would ask for a contact address first aren't they?"

"Aa, something like an email address."

"Hey, this is enough isn't it. Let's go back while we still haven't been found out."

"Okay."

I, who left that place in a hurry, suddenly realized that I've been holding Houki's hand all this while.

"Ah, sorry."

"N-No, that's....I-It's not like, that's, it doesn't bother me at all....."

"Is that so. Then, let's go back to everyone shall we?"

"Y-Yeah!"

Houki and me returned to the sofa at the living room together. In there's the board game that Rin played with everyone spread out.

Just like this, these fun moments passed in the blink of an eye.

Epilogue: Reflection on the Water's Surface

"Ooh, what a relief. It hasn't run out yet."

The vending machine closest to my house. I bought around 10 cans of drinks there to replenish the stock that had run out at home.

In the beginning, Charl said "We can't have the birthday boy to do something like that!", but today I didn't do anything at all, so doing this was my own wish.

"Ummm, canned coffee for Tatenashi-san, ocha for Houki, Rin's is oolong tea and Charl's is orange juice, Laura's is sports drink, Cecilia's is red tea, and then...."

I picked up the drinks that I took from the vending machine's receive slot and carried them using both of my arms.

"Is this all? Well then, let's head back..."

But, from the place that I walked out from, on the spot that the vending machine's light barely reached, a person's silhouette could be seen.

"What the...?"

Even if that person wanted to buy some drinks, the place he's standing at was too far away from the vending machine.

On the other hand, it's definitely not someone I know too.

Thinking like that, when I took two steps forward, the silhouette also came forward a step.

".......''

The silhouette was a girl. Furthermore, it was a face that I recognized.

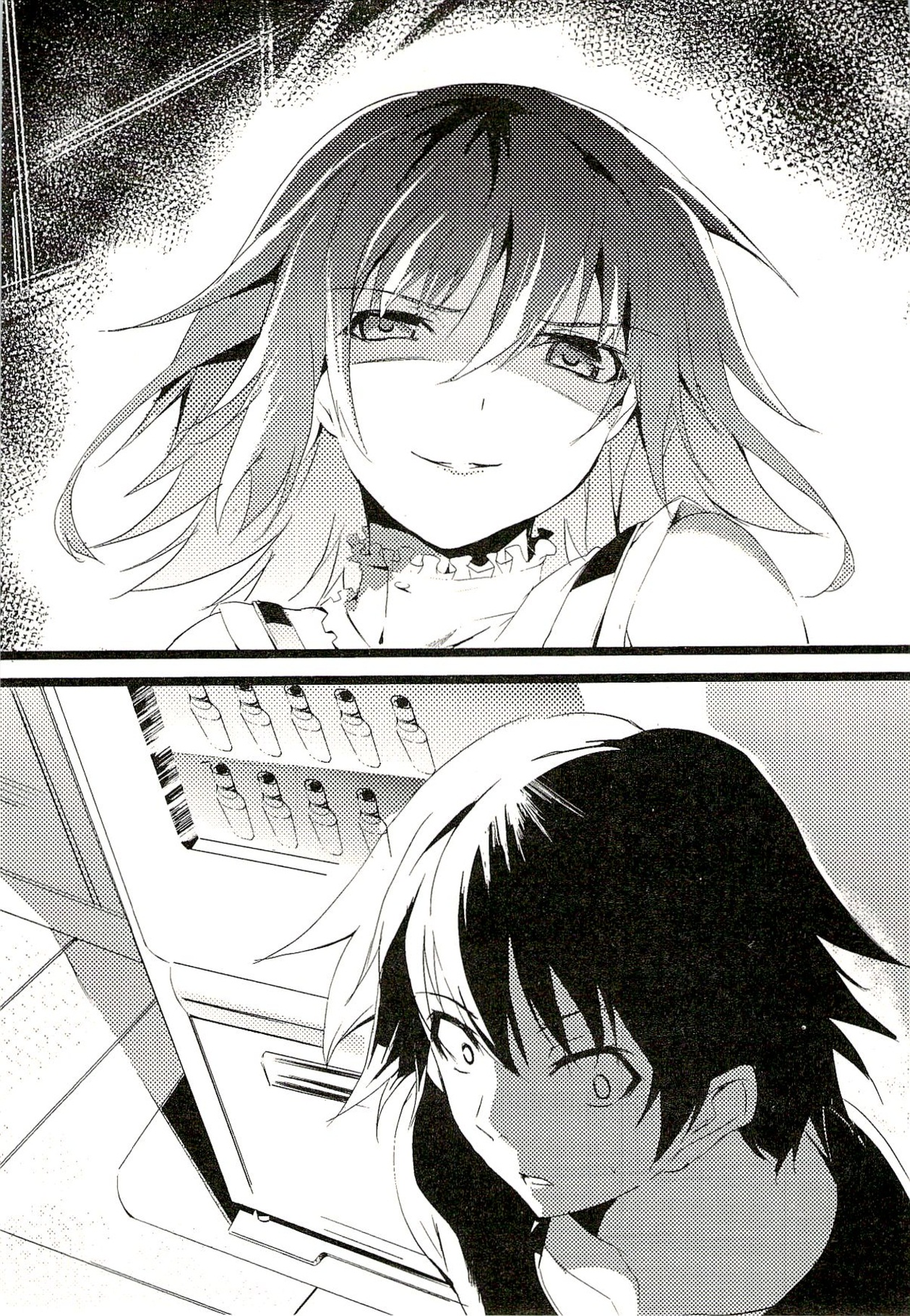
No, it's not something that can be said by "a face that I recognized".

"Chi-Chifuyu-nee...?"

A girl around 15- to 16 years old. But, that face abnormally resembled Chifuyu-nee.

"No."

The girl opened her mouth. A faint smile surfaced on that face, and that expression doesn't resemble Chifuyu-nee even a little bit.



"I am you, Orimura Ichika."

"Wh-what...?"

"Sorry to trouble you earlier..."[6E 1]

"!? You, could you be [Silent Zephyr]'s - "

"That's right."

The girl took a step toward me.

"And my name is - "

"Orimura Madoka."

Orimura....Madoka? I have never heard that name before, but why does she have the same surname as me?.. .. No, rather than that.

Why does she resemble Chifuyu-nee that much!?

"In order for me to be myself....I'll take your life."

The thing that she held out all of a sudden was a handgun that released a dull light.

Bang! A dry gunshot sound reverberated - .

Afterwords

Hello, hello, it's Yumizuru here. Everyone, how are you? As for me, you see, it's that. Getting admitted to hospital, getting out of hospital, having new medicine prescribed, trying new painkillers, there's a lot going on here.

No, that's not an excuse isn't it? I'm sorry for being late with volume 6. *Bow bow*

Well then, Cecilia's big part volume 6, how was it? This story wasn't in the plan originally. That's why this story is also not in the IS notebook. Because Silent Zephyrs appeared on volume 5, I have to think about this plot in a hurry. But, I think it turn out quite well.

Okiura-sensei is really great isn't he? For example, the color pages containing Cecilia in page 3 is really great. The Silent Zephyrs is also really cool. Please take care of me next time to. *Clap*

Good chance, I wonder if you also read the manga version of IS? The first tankoubon volume of the manga is sold on store starting from 22 December 2010. Let's look at Akahoshi-sensei's cool and cute characters together! The serialization is in the monthly Alive magazine. There's also the help from Zengo!-sensei for the structure so it turns out really well.

Also, the spin-off 4-koma is currently running in the monthly Alive magazine! The one in charge is Yamaguchi-sensei who draw the illustration for the Zero no Tsukaima Gaiden : Tabitha's Journey! The characters are super-cute.

And then, you can order Houki changing clothes' figure with the mail order inside Alive monthly magazine. Make sure you get the limited special part through the same mail order! Me? I bought 5 of them! Because it's being supervised by Kurashima-san you know?

My long dream of getting the figures of my work is also fulfilled. Uooohhh-

The anime version is also progressing well. I attended the after record quite a few times, it really is amazing. Everyone's ideas and interests are shining. Please enjoy the anime starting from January too!

And the casts are also wonderful aren't they. My hope is also mostly fulfilled so that's also something I'm happy about.

Lately, I'm always playing the anime OP and ED when I write my manuscript. Let's play this when there's an incoming call. I wonder if there will be one. I'm so excited.

The OP is by Kuribayashi Minami-san, the ED is by Hikasa Youko-san and other(it's a secret!). How extravagant.

Anime version and figurines are completed so I wonder if next is game version. It would be nice if it could join a war with super robot in the game isn't it. It might be hard because it's not a full bodied mecha though isn't it? No, I'm not going to give up!

Lately I played with fans of XBox 360. Voice chat is really interesting isn't it. My tag is put on the blog so if it's okay, let's be friends.

By the way, about the sign present plan on the blog, it becomes 10 times more than what's planned. Thank you for everyone signing up! It's to do this kind of thing once in a while isn't it.

There might be some people who already realized, Cecilia's "Bang!" from Okiura-sensei's old idea. Besides that one, there's also some scenes using old idea from Okiura-sensei's picture. Just as expected, interaction is really the way to go when making working isn't it!

By the way, about the anime DVD/BD, I also write a short side story of IS as a bonus with the DVD/BD. Of course it's a limited edition novel for the non re-recording DVD/BD.

Or rather, I have to write it from now ain't I. I haven't decided the plot. This is bad.

Now, there will be a new character again on volume 7.

It's [that] character's imouto. Note, it's not Ran. If it's Ran it wouldn't be a new character would it?

Well then, let's work hard writing the short side story shall we? Let's meet again on volume 7.

- Yumizuru Izuru, a certain day on November 2010.

Translation Notes and References

Chapter 1

1. ↑ Isn't this a Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone reference. You know the Mirror of Erased
2. ↑ Iris seems to always call Natasha as Natale, probably a nickname or something.
3. ↑ Meaning Hurricane's Revival
4. ↑ Regen meaning Rain
5. ↑ Not in the pervert way, it's satisfying Ichika body's need of tickling.
6. ↑ Basically there's 3 things going on at the same time. Charlotte is blankly staring at Tatenashi, Ichika is looking at Charlotte face, and Ichika noticed that Charlotte's expression disappeared while staring at Tatenashi.
7. ↑ This is a literal translation of the Japanese proverb is 針.
8. ↑ Yubikiri Genman is Japanese pinky promise which is usually done by children at Japan. The original song they use when they do the promise can be seen at here
9. ↑ T/N note : basically, Charlotte is describing that if Laura is a cat, then she's in the getting threatened state where the cat raises its tail and all its fur.

10. ↑ This is a twist of た(Tarareba) which means " making excuses" and (Nirareba) which is some kind of beef, leek, and bean sprout stir fry [1]
11. ↑ Nekomimi means "Cat ear". Here it means that the pajama has cat ears on them. See Volume 4 Chapter 2

Chapter 2

1. ↑ Wajimanuri is a lacquer product from Wajima city [2]
2. ↑ A Japanese pampas grass [3]
3. ↑ A Japanese term for smiling
4. ↑ T/N Note : The two men who happen to be there saw Charlotte's smile and thought that smile is for them(they thought she was flirting with them)
5. ↑ She wanted to say "Hai" which means "Yes" and said "Hahi" instead which I roughly translated into " Yesh". The original Japanese word was 裏 which means that she spoke wrong, could be because she spoke in high pitch tone, or like in this example, she misspelled one syllable.
6. ↑ Meaning Ichika believes he is not yet fully aware of the feelings of girls. Japanese usually use the word "delicacy" to mean sensitiveness towards someone's feelings. This term and it's usage was

probably influenced by the english word "delicate" as in fragile or sensitive.

7. ↑ The english equivalent of this sentence is "Okay, Say Aaaaa".
8. ↑ Sound of putting a spoon into a mouth.
9. ↑ She wishes Ichika wouldn't feel the ice cream's texture because he gets nervous when being feed by Charlotte. So basically Charlotte is disappointed by the lack of flustering by Ichika when she fed him.

Chapter 3

1. ↑ Ojou-sama mode activated
2. ↑ Sports bras are a bras that provides additional support to female breasts during physical exercise.
3. ↑ Shiatsuis Japanese for "finger pressure," and consists of finger and palm pressure, stretches, and other massage techniques.
4. ↑ Manual lymphatic drainage (MLD) is a type of gentle massage which is intended by proponents to encourage the natural circulation of the lymph through the body.
5. ↑ Musical instrument, do I need to say more?
6. ↑ Same as above

7. ↑ Rhythm is movement marked by the regulated succession of strong and weak elements, or of opposite or different conditions.
8. ↑ Tempo is the speed or pace of a given piece.
9. ↑ Ojou-sama is the term used to refer to ladies of high social standing. English equivalent is "Milady" or "Lady"
10. ↑ Like at chapter 2, the original Japanese word used here is also 裏, but in this case, it's because she speak in high and squeaking voice instead of mispronouncing a word.
11. ↑ In other words, she tried to make her words feels natural and befitting of a lady.
12. ↑ Sound of butt being grabbed.
13. ↑ Sound produced from mouth due to sudden surprise caused by physical sensations, like stroking or tickling
14. ↑ Gome Yakisoba is a variation of yakisoba where they put beef, shrimp, carrot, bamboo shoot, shitake mushroom, and various other ingredients on top of it and then soaked and mixed with some kind of paste that's made from potato starch that's been diluted with water.For picture

15. ↑ Inoshishi-musha means a soldier who only knows charging ahead like a boar. It's composed of 2 Japanese words, Inoshishi(猪) which means wild boar and Musha() which means warrior.
16. ↑ Cosplay, short for "costume play", is a type of performance art in which participants don costumes and accessories to represent a specific character or idea.
17. ↑ Kemonomimi (ie: Animal-ears).
18. ↑ Basically she is expressing that calling her sensei is ridiculous. It can also be translated it into "Sensei, my ass", but it feels too rude considering Laura wasn't cursing here.
19. ↑ Dogfighting: A dogfight, or dog fight, is a form of aerial combat between fighter aircraft; in particular, combat of maneuver at short range, where each side is aware of the other's presence.
20. ↑ "Ohime-sama dakko" or "Being carried like a princess" is a recurring action in anime, manga and light novels that occurs between love interests in which one party carries the other in his/her arms. It is considered a high level move and the fantasy/desire of all girls out there. English equivalent is the Bridal Carry.

Chapter 4

1. ↑ Female Screaming Sound
2. ↑ Shooting Sounds
3. ↑ Coughing Sounds
4. ↑ Sounds of metal against metal
5. ↑ Light Surprise Exclamation
6. ↑ Sighing Sound
7. ↑ Dashi-shiru is a soup that contains dashi in it.
8. ↑ Kaichou means president (thought it isn't as formal as it's English equivalent). In IS Academy the strongest IS *user* becomes the student council president. Tatenashi Sarashiki currently holds these titles.

Epilogue

1. ↑ The sentence is said in a mocking manner. The original Japanese wording is 世(sewa ni nattana)